9-2020

Critical District Supports for New Magnet Programs

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NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY
1886

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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May 14, 2020
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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements of

Doctor of Education

National Louis University

2020

Abstract

Magnet schools have been a remedy districts, including the district under study, use to create voluntary integration within school districts under court-ordered desegregation. The purpose of this study was to determine how district leaders can support magnet programs in districts not receiving Magnet Schools Assistance Program grant funding and to identify the challenges new magnet programs face. The context of this study was a large school district transforming seven existing schools into new magnet programs. My study pointed to the importance of secured funding and the support of a wide range of district level leaders. My study highlighted the many challenges new magnet programs face when funding is not secured prior to initiation. I suggest the creation of a Magnet Advisory Team to participate in the planning of new programs, including committing to fiscal support for critical school-based positions and principal selection. Additionally, I recommend when these criteria cannot be met, districts postpone the introduction of new programs until such time that full support can be secured.

Preface

I have spent nearly my entire life as a student enrolled in a magnet school, working at a magnet school, or supporting magnet programs at the district level. My experience at my high school magnet program exposed me to a classical education complete with three years of Latin and a strong background in humanities. Students attended my school from all over the city. Students from all economic strata, races, religions, and cultures interacted daily, building life-long relationships I still draw on today. As a practitioner of magnet programs, I strive to create that same opportunity for the students I serve today.

In 2006, I became a magnet lead teacher for the first time, leading the transition of a traditional neighborhood school to an International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme. When in 2017, I received the opportunity to support magnet programs at the district level, I knew some of the challenges that I would face in creating the same experiences I enjoyed as a student. Unlike the schools where I served as a magnet lead teacher, the schools in which I now served did not receive the Magnet Schools Assistance Program grant to fund the many supports upon which I had depended in previous schools.

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement granted funding to more than 30 school districts across the United States. When my district was not one of them, I had just begun work on my dissertation and knew that studying districts not supported by federal Magnet School Assistance Program (MSAP) funds could be useful not only to me in my immediate practice, but also to other school districts seeking to create magnet programs without MSAP funds to provide significant financial support.

Through this experience, I learned about the need for a wide range of voices to share in the mission, vision, and advocacy for large-scale school transformation. Leaders from multiple departments must support the project through staffing, budget considerations, and partnering in accountability measures. Without a broad-based commitment to provide for the needs of the program, realizing the vision of a program such as the one that had such a transformative effect on me, is a struggle, if possible, at

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the people who have supported me through this effort. Without this support, I could not have completed this work, and for that I am eternally grateful.

To Dr. Sparks, I thank you for pushing my thinking, challenging me to improve my writing, and, sometimes, helping me to uncover the hidden significance of my observations through questioning that let me discover what you could already see.

To Dr. Butler, I thank you for your thoughtful input which pushed me to provide a more complete and cogent argument.

To Dr. Dan Buckman, I credit your faith in our cohort, your unceasing positivity, and your responsiveness when I have needed my assistance to the success of my cohort.

To my colleagues, thank you for your support and for your willingness to answer questions and push my thinking. I thank you also for your belief in me and your encouragement throughout this experience.

Lastly, I thank the educators in my cohort. Sarah, Beth, Carrie, Christine, John, Kyra, Holly, Chris, Tia, Lorilynn, and Crystal, I have learned from you. I have shared your passion for your topics, and I know children will have a better, richer education because of your work.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the people in my life without whom I could not have completed this journey.

To my husband, Greg, who has made tremendous sacrifices to allow me to stretch and grow in my career, a thank you could never be adequate. You have cared for me, encouraged me, and pushed me over the last three years. You are the heart and foundation of our family.

To my son, Jack, who inspired me daily. At least half of my purpose has been to show you great things are possible through persistence.

Dr. Carla Sparks has been a confidante and support professionally and personally. She is truly a shepherd for her students. She never wavered in her belief that I would complete this work, even when I doubted myself.

To my mother-in-law, Barb, you are a shining example of perseverance and academic excellence. Your own academic journey was a constant, shining example to me as I pursued this dream.

To my parents, you have taught me to dream big dreams, but to always seek to make the world better. It was your influence that likely set me on my path as an educator. I thank you for teaching me to find my life's purpose and pursue it wholeheartedly.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Purpose of the Program Evaluation

In 2016 a new superintendent was elected in a midsized district in the south. The community elected a superintendent with the mandate of bringing reforms to the district. As a part of this reform, the new leadership reorganized many departments, and they collapsed many positions, creating others. The potential to be part of an innovative movement to serve a community characterized by high poverty and low post secondary school attendance drew educators from school districts across the state. My experience working with transforming low performing schools into high performing magnet programs took me to the district.

Prior to moving to this district, I served as the magnet lead teacher at three emerging magnet schools in three different school districts from 2007-2016. At all three schools, district leaders had selected the school to implement the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP). They intended the program to be a means to increase enrollment, balance the schools' demographics, and to provide extensive pedagogical reform to improve student achievement. In two of the schools, I was able to lead the schools through the IB authorization process. In the second school, we were able to not only implement the magnet program with fidelity, but also increase student achievement scores dramatically. We were able to increase student enrollment, filling our school and maintaining a waiting list, as well as create a truly diverse student population, which reflected the larger district population. This school was recognized by the Magnet Schools of America all three years we were eligible while I was there as a

School of Distinction and a School of Excellence. While I was able to begin the transformation process with the third school, I left to work in the district of my study prior to their program's completion.

These experiences exposed me to the effect district support of a magnet program can have on the program's development. In two of the districts, the school was part of a cohort of magnet schools to receive the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant. The third school received some additional funding to support the program, but not to the degree of the first two. My experience with the MSAP grant was an asset to the district under study as this district applied for the MSAP grant in the 2017 grant cycle with a cohort of six magnet schools. When leaders of the Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement did not choose this district as a recipient, we faced developing six new programs with no additional funding.

When I was hired in the district under study, I initially worked as part of the professional development department. Upon my arrival, I began meeting with all magnet schools to provide support for their magnet themes. After moving to the School Choice and Student Assignment Office, I was able to support schools more fully as well as advocate for programs with district leaders.

When I first began working with the magnet programs in the district under study, the magnet program choices were limited to three elementary programs, three middle school programs, and 10 high school programs. Of these existing programs, the creation of two were a response to the original federal desegregation decree. Both were elementary schools with enrollment almost entirely determined by a lottery. As in many school districts across the nation, parents sued the district to integrate schools forcibly.

The resulting desegregation agreement created two schools, which would attract students from across the district to create racial balance. According to data reported to the School Board during zoning planning, if the School Board rezoned these schools as neighborhood schools, the resulting demographic shift would create almost completely segregated populations in five elementary schools (School Board Minutes, February 21, 2019).

Racial demographics only tell part of the story. Because the district did not offer transportation to magnet programs, participation in these programs was limited to those students whose parents or family were able to arrange transportation to and from school. The school district, though only mid-sized in the state, was one of the largest districts in land mass in the state. Because of the travel distance to magnet schools located in the center of such a geographically large district, the lack of available transportation options limited students living in the north and south ends of the district from participating in innovative, themed programs of instruction.

In addition to providing opportunities for students in areas of high poverty, four of the magnet schools consistently showed little progress toward increasing student achievement. Both elementary schools in the northern and southernmost areas had just moved from “D” school ratings to “C” ratings as determined by the state’s Department of Education. While these school grades showed progress, the improved school grade was more reflective of academic growth than on grade level achievement. The two middle schools in the same areas were experiencing similar stagnation in academic achievement and saw flagging enrollment. The district viewed the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) program as an opportunity to transform the six schools by

providing intensive professional development as well as much needed resources and upgrades to technology.

When I began working with the district, the previous Director of School Choice and Student Assignments had promised the community to introduce four completely new STEAM programs and significantly modify two existing magnet schools by adding a STEAM component. District leaders also planned an additional International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) to support the growth of one of the IB Diploma Programmes (DP). The plan included an elementary school and a middle school offering STEAM programming in both the far north and the far south areas of the district in addition to adding STEAM programming at existing magnet schools at an elementary and middle school, located centrally within the district close to the downtown area. The MYP would be located in the southern end of the district to provide MYP schools at each end of the county. This deliberate placement of magnet schools made it possible for students who lacked the means for transportation to attend a specialized innovative program.

The district had applied for a federal grant, the MSAP grant, to fund the significant changes intended at each of the STEAM schools. The MSAP grant would provide for extensive professional development for the entire staffs of the six new STEAM programs through Discovery Education's STEM Formation program. District leaders from the School Choice office planned to offer intensive training to administrators and teachers on a wide-scale and sustained level. Additionally, the grant application outlined upgrades to technology and resources at each school. This plan aimed to level the playing field for students living in poverty at the edges of the school

district, who, up until the addition of these schools, had no viable choice options for specialized instruction. District leaders conducted a series of community meetings for each new school, assuring the community and the School Board that district and school leaders would support the developing programs, regardless of the MSAP grant award status, building excitement for these programs with school staff, students, and parents.

The district did not receive the nearly $13,000,000 MSAP grant. When the district was not a recipient of the grant, district leaders suddenly faced the challenge of how to assist these six schools in a significant transformation with no additional funding. They no longer had a plan for funding the infrastructure required to purchase curriculum, update technology, hire public relations support, and provide for the significant amount of professional development required to integrate a magnet theme across all disciplines throughout each school. Compounding the challenge, district leaders planned the addition of a new IB MYP, taking the number of new programs to seven within a two-year period.

The school district under study covered a large geographic area, and prior to the introduction of these programs, there were no opportunities for students to attend highly innovative science and technology rich programs at the northern and southern ends of the district. Because the district did not offer transportation for magnet programs, attendance at the existing magnet programs was limited to students whose parents were able to provide transportation.

District leaders placed these programs at these schools to improve academic achievement and support their communities by creating career pathways for many STEAM related fields. In a school district where nearly 80% (citation withheld to protect confidentiality) of the students were eligible for a free or reduced price lunch due to low

incomes, the district intended to take steps to alleviate a gap in workforce skills in STEAM industries across the nation. According to the President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness, the United States was not on track to see the significant increases in graduates in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics related fields required to maintain a position as a global competitor and innovator (President's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness, 2011-2012).

According to Langdon, McKittrick, Beede, Khan, and Doms at the Department of Commerce in their 2011 ESA Brief, STEM or STEAM field related occupations expected 17% growth from 2008 to 2018. These data were particularly poignant when learning that careers in STEM fields out pay other fields, "regardless of their educational attainment" (Langdon et al., 2011, p. 7). According to the report, workers in STEM fields earned approximately $25.00 per hour in 2010. These workers were earning more than $9.00 more an hour than their non-STEM field peers earned (Langdon et al., 2011).

This emphasis on the long-term financial rewards of a focus on STEM education was particularly critical in a school district where nearly 79% of the students would qualify for a free or reduced price lunch based on their family's income. Preparation for these high paying jobs could potentially change the entire financial landscape of the school district and the surrounding communities.

District leaders did not have to wait to see the benefits of a STEM education. Students across the nation were benefiting from curriculum focused on STEM and STEAM connections. Santa Rosa County, a school district located in the panhandle of Florida adopted STEM as a district-wide school improvement initiative utilizing Discovery Education.

The leaders of the district under study expected a similar effect from the introduction of the IB MYP at a middle school. The IB World Organization had conducted studies. This school, a feeder school to one of the high schools offering the IB's DP, suffered from low achievement scores and a poor reputation in the community. The district leaders chose to place this programme at the school to retain students who were leaving for other school options and to increase student achievement in the hopes to bolster the DP at the high school.

Several studies supported the use of the MYP as a school-wide improvement model. Wade (2011) studied 10 schools, five MYPs and five schools not offering the MYP. All schools were demographically similar. She found that school culture rated higher overall at MYP schools compared to their traditional companion schools. Wade and Wolanin (2013) built upon the work of Wade's 2011 study finding evidence that students participating in the MYP were more likely to enroll in advanced level courses at the high school level. Gordon and Bergeron (2015) found that MYP performance correlated to DP performance and that a one-unit increase in performance at the MYP level would correspond to a .5-unit increase at the DP level.

The research showed that the district goals for these programs were not beyond reach. The new programs were meant to increase student achievement, change school culture, offer new opportunities, and support programs at the high school level. If the new magnet programs succeeded, thousands of students would experience a dramatic change in their school environment and prepare for advanced course work at the high school level.

The purpose of this evaluation was to identify the efforts the school district could take to maximize support of new magnet schools given the limited nature of available staff and financial resources. I intended to analyze planning and funding decisions in the target district as well as the outcomes of these decisions as measured through student achievement, student enrollment, and school culture. This study resulted in advocacy for making choices with the resources, which are research based, and results oriented.

Rationale

As a product of magnet schools and a long-time practitioner of the IB MYP in several schools, I was excited to begin my new journey supporting all magnet programs in the target school district. My job duties included ensuring the success of these new magnet programs, along with existing programs throughout the district. In 2017, when the new superintendent and deputies restructured the district, magnet programs became part of the new Student Assignments, School Choice, and Records Department. For the first time, district leaders tasked a specific department to provide a variety of supports and the ability to make decisions regarding policies governing these programs. As district leaders were developing new programs and creating a new department to support the programs concurrently, I quickly saw that it was imperative to research and chronicle the decision-making processes to create a pathway for future successes.

Not only were leaders creating new programs, but they were also developing a new department. The Director of Student Assignments, School Choice, and Records changed during this time of change, as well as the district leaders added a new coordinator position to the department. There was no established way of work for introducing new magnet programs to the target district. The district had never created a

large cohort of magnet programs at the same time previously, and all departments including finance, curriculum and instruction, and public relations saw the effects of the development of these programs.

Kotter and Cohen (2002) in *The Heart of Change* provided a template for major institutional changes similar to that of the district studied here. Their eight steps to change served as a people centered approach. Critical to their practice was the need to implement, Build the Guiding Team and Get the Vision Right steps two and three respectively (Kotter & Cohen, 2002). In these steps, the authors emphasized the need to build on a sense of urgency with a team who were committed to the change, knew why they were selected, and were guided through challenges to work together. They further emphasized the critical role a clear vision plays in the change. They charged change agents with taking action as bold as the vision in order to make the proposed change reality. These two steps proved to be critical in the development of the new magnet programs.

Goals

The intended goal of my program evaluation was to determine what impact the current level of district support had on the development of new magnet programs within the district and identify areas where further support or a change in focus could improve the programs as they continued to evolve. I wanted to investigate the impact district decisions had on the seven new programs as well as identify, through my research, paths for program support implemented in other districts of similar means across the country. My goal directly related to planning for student learning through fiscal responsibility and policy development. I was able to identify practices which were effective in supporting

schools as they implemented and developed new magnet programs and decisions and practices which impeded their progress.

Definition of Terms

Magnet Schools are free public schools offering specific themed programming in the effort to attract students from beyond their geographic zones or boundaries. Magnet schools developed in response to desegregation orders handed down from the court system in the wake of the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) verdict. The Brown v. Board of Education case resulted in a determination that the practice of segregating students in schools, which were "separate but equal", was unconstitutional, ushering in a new era of desegregation in schools across the nation.

Since then, magnet schools have evolved and changed. In my professional experience, I have observed many magnet programs serve the original purpose of providing incentives to support desegregation within districts under court order, but I have also noted magnet schools created to increase enrollment or to provide concentrated, innovative academic curriculum to a segment of the school district which had been particularly underserved. It has often been a misconception that magnet schools are reserved for students who are high achievers. Many popular magnet programs such as the programs offered by the International Baccalaureate World Organization and the Cambridge Programs offer an international education. Magnet themes such as the arts and STEAM seem to meet students where their interests lie.

Additional definitions helpful to understanding the topic include:

Magnet Theme—A specialized program of instruction which attracts students and parents to select a school to which they are not zoned.

Magnet Schools of America—a national association of magnet schools and districts dedicated to representing and supporting magnet schools and their districts, schools, teachers, students and parents.

Magnet Schools Assistance Program—A grant program offered by the federal Office of Innovation and Improvement utilized to provide support for significant changes to target schools including curriculum, technology, marketing, and professional development. This grant also often funds staffing at both the school and district level to ensure the new program is supported.

School Choice—A program designed to provide parents and guardians the opportunity to select school options outside of the traditional zoned school. School choice can refer to magnet schools, controlled open enrollment, charter schools, home school, virtual school, and private school.

Controlled Open Enrollment—Open enrollment is the process by which a school or district accepts students outside of their zoned schools to enroll in their school of choice. Controlled open enrollment is the process of selectively applying the open enrollment process to schools at which the total enrollment has not reached an established cap. This process allows for schools to increase enrollment, but also allows for parents to withdraw from schools perceived as low achieving.

STEM/STEAM –These terms are used somewhat interchangeably. They refer to the integration of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics into the curriculum. In STEAM the arts have been added as the ability to think creatively and create is critical to many STEM/STEAM careers.

Research Questions

The primary question that led to this evaluation, "How can we support magnet programs in a non-MSAP supported district?"

Subsequent questions included:

a. What are the critical supports districts can provide to support the development of magnet programs?

b. What are other districts doing to support their magnet programs?

c. What are the challenges to the implementation of new magnet programs?

Conclusion

School districts across the nation utilize magnet programs to support their desegregation efforts as well as to increase student achievement. Many are supported by the Magnet Schools Assistance Program grant, which aids with the transformation at the school level and provides the financial support needed at the district level as well. The district at the center of this study is implementing seven new magnet programs without additional federal assistance from the Magnet Schools Assistance Program grant. This study will identify areas where support is needed and create a road map for implementation for schools and districts for which resources are limited.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forced school districts to act to meet goals laid out in the Brown v. Board of Education (1954) decision, magnet schools have served as a vehicle for voluntary desegregation. Over time, magnet schools have evolved as critical options within the school choice movement and as district solutions to schools in turnaround status. Research has continued to address the effects of magnet schools on minority and economic isolation, challenges magnet schools face with funding and curriculum, and student achievement in magnet schools compared to non-magnet schools and charter schools.

I gathered research from a number of sources, primarily utilizing EBSCO's database for education. Magnet Schools of America and The Civil Rights Project also served as key sources for information regarding background, trends, and evaluation of magnet schools. I also collected research from government agency reports as well as court rulings in critical cases which have guided the creation of magnet schools both nationally, and in the school district at study.

History of Magnet Schools

A magnet school was described by the Magnet Schools of America (MSA) (2020a) as a public school with a specialized curriculum or theme which, "attracts students from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds" (p. 3). Magnet schools, "provide parents with choices for their child's education within the public-school system" (p. 3).

Magnet schools were rooted in the civil rights movement. When the Supreme

Court decided the landmark Brown v. Board of Board of Education (1954) verdict against segregation practices formerly upheld in the Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), they established that separate but equal practices were an inherent violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (1954). This decision prompted President Nixon to act to assist school districts across the nation to move forward with desegregation plans. His Emergency School Aid Act of 1970 would provide, “The financing of innovative techniques for providing educationally sound interracial experiences for children in racially isolated schools" (United States Congress, 1970, p. 22).

The Keyes v. Denver (1973) verdict set the standard for proving institutional desegregation. However, the Miliken v. Bradley decision in 1974 made forced desegregation across urban and suburban lines impossible. At this time, civil rights groups were winning nearly every desegregation suit filed and many cities looked to magnet programs as a means to create voluntary desegregation within their districts (Ayscue, Levy, Siegel-Hawley, & Woodward, 2017). The Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) developed out of Nixon’s efforts in 1976 as an Amendment to the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA). The MSAP continued to fund magnet programs through ESAA until 1981, only to reinstate funding three years later. The MSAP gave federal dollars to school districts seeking to achieve desegregation through the creation of magnet schools (Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2012). According to the MSA’s “A Snapshot of Magnet Schools in America,” the number of magnet schools has grown to include more than 4,340 magnet schools, “providing high-quality public education to nearly 3.5 million students across 46 states and the District of Columbia” (Magnet

Schools of America, 2018, p. 1). Indeed, according to the MSA, "1 out of every 15 public school students in the U.S. attends a magnet school" (p. 5).

The U.S. Department of Education conducted three reviews of MSAP fund recipients since 1983. The first report found that 60% of recipient magnet schools could be classified as fully segregated (Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2012; Ayscue et al., 2017). Ayscue et al. (2017) pointed out that these first data reflected enrollment prior to the Supreme Court's termination of desegregation plans during the 1990s. By 1996, 42% of newly formed magnet schools achieved desegregation. More recent results in 2003 showed 57% of new magnet schools achieved desegregation. Siegel-Hawley and Frankenberg (2012) further pointed out that the third study, "did not research desegregation goals, suggesting that priorities—at least at the federal level—had changed considerably" (p. 9).

In the 2007 *Parents Involved* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that districts could no longer utilize race as a factor for enrollment, stating "Racial balancing is not transformed from 'patently unconstitutional' to a compelling state interest simply by relabeling it 'racial diversity' " (Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1, 2007, para. 7). School districts would no longer be able to utilize race as a factor in student placement. Magnet schools continued to provide options to create voluntary desegregation using targeted marketing (Ayscue et al., 2017, p. 17).

Magnet schools are no longer the only school choice option. Charter schools, virtual schools, voucher programs for private schools, and a rise in homeschooling have dramatically increased the number of options parents have when planning their child's education. While parents have recognized charter schools and magnet schools as school

choice options for some time, controlled open enrollment is relatively new. The State Statutes section 1003.22(6) stated “Parents of public school students may seek any public educational school choice options that are applicable and available to students throughout the state” (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Section 1002.31 (1) further defined school choice options including open enrollment. The state of the district at study defined “controlled open enrollment” as “a public education delivery system that allows school districts to make student assignments using parents’ indicated preferential education choice as a significant factor” (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). Controlled open enrollment allowed parents the freedom to choose any school, regardless of school zone or district.

At the same time that school choice options were expanding, school districts were becoming increasingly segregated (Tefera, Frankenberg, Siegel-Hawley, & Chirichigno, 2011). Tefera et al. (2011) stated, “nearly 30 percent of African American and Latino suburban students are in hyper-segregated suburban schools with 0-10 percent white students” (p.3). Siegel-Hawley and Frankenberg (2011) stated that

> likewise, high levels of segregation for Black and Latino students exist in magnet and charter schools. In the same year, a full 70 percent of Black charter school students attended intensely segregated minority schools (where 90-100% of students are from minority racial backgrounds), compared to just 50% of Black magnet school students. (p. 10)

Cincinnati Public Schools was one of the first large districts to utilize magnet schools for voluntary desegregation purposes through the creation of Sands Montessori Schools in 1975, enjoying initial success at removing minority isolation in Cincinnati’s

West End. Over time, however, as the school gained in reputation more students from the affluent suburbs began to crowd out neighborhood students. As of 2014, no West End students attended Sands Montessori at all (Sparks, 2014). Parrillo (2015) examined the long-term effects of school choice on social and economic segregation in Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) over eight years from 1999-2006. His findings showed magnet schools created more racial and economic isolation at non-magnet high schools within the district, excluding the significant enrollment in parochial schools in the area.

In addition to the increase in minority isolation, Black and Latino students experienced a greater degree of socioeconomic isolation (Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2011, p. 10). Chmielewski (2017) asked whether the achievement gap between students with economic means and those of low socio-economic status (SES) was changing across the globe over the last 50 years. She found that the achievement gap in three countries within the study had expanded over the last 50 years, including the United States.

School districts across the nation were turning to magnet schools as more than an option to reduce minority and socioeconomic isolation. Districts across the nation were turning to magnet schools to raise student achievement in low performing schools. Kahlenberg wrote about Arne Duncan's approach to the turnaround model in his 2009 *Education Week* article. While Duncan's model was to change the adults at the school, Kahlenberg wrote,

> The most promising 'turnaround' model is one that recognizes these realities and seeks to turn high-poverty schools into magnet schools that change not only the faculty, but also the student and parent mix in the school. Failing schools can be shuttered and reopened with new themes and pedagogical approaches that attract

new teachers and a mix of middle-class and low-income students. (p. 32)

Indeed, Wake County, North Carolina, which includes Raleigh, exemplified how magnet programs can be used to transform the social structure of schools nearly eliminating economic isolation in their public schools. To show the consequences of the flight of affluence from city centers, a trend which was devastating school districts across the nation, Grant, 2011, in his book, *Hope and Despair in the American City: Why There Are No Bad Schools in Raleigh*, compared two cities, Syracuse, New York and Raleigh, North Carolina. He held Raleigh as an example of what can happen when cities and districts have vision and are willing to take significant action to change, committing to an initial 27 new magnet schools with cross-city bussing beginning in the 1980s to the present day. By 2003, 91% of third grade through eighth grade students passed state reading and mathematics exams. Grant credited much of this success to the long-term planning Wake County put in place as early as the late 1970s when the district first began to plan for the integration of schools (2011).

While Grant held Raleigh as an example of exemplary schools in large part due to their magnet programs, a research team from the American Institute for Research who tracked achievement at schools before and after they became magnet schools found mixed results. According to Sparks (2015), Betts, the lead researcher said, "It's not that we're finding none of the magnet schools have an impact on achievement; it's that it's quite mixed" (p. 10). Nine magnet schools saw significant improvements in math and language arts; six saw declines, and the rest had no difference (Sparks, 2015).

Adcock and Philips (2000) collected quantitative data from student achievement scores at magnet and non-magnet schools throughout the Prince George's County school

district. The main findings in the study showed that although magnet elementary students outperformed their non-magnet peers, this could be accounted for by the fact that more high-performing students self-select magnet schools. Data also showed that Talented and Gifted (TAG) students at non-magnet schools scored higher on achievement tests than their magnet counterparts. When controlling for student ability, student achievement showed that non-magnet elementary schools performed better on state testing.

Betts, Kitmitto, Levin, Bos, and Eaton (2016) conducted another study of magnet school achievement. This report was a study of 21 elementary schools over seven years each of whom were recipients of the MSAP grant and the effects on student achievement. Findings showed that test scores in traditional magnet schools improved for all students except in math. Test scores in destination magnet schools largely remained unchanged.

The University of Minnesota's Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity, in their position paper *Integrated Magnet Schools: Outcomes and Best Practices* (2013), stated that, "An important part of the rationale for magnet schools is the desire to create a school environment that improves academic achievement for students of all races" (p. 2). Their meta-analysis attempted to make sense of conflicting results in several often-cited studies on the effects of magnet schools to reduce minority isolation and to close the achievement gap between minority and majority students as well as students from a low socioeconomical background and their middle class and high-income peers (2013).

Wang, Schweig, and Herman (2014) attempted to separate the effects of differences at separate sites to create broad understandings from very different contexts within multiple districts. They asked the questions:

1. How do students attending magnet schools perform on state tests in relation to matched students at comparison schools?
2. How consistent are the results across schools?
3. Can the variation across studies be explained by differences in program implementation?
4. How do students in two demographic subgroups attending these MSAP schools perform in relation to matched students at comparison schools?

What they found was that the level of magnet program implementations and specifically the level of interaction of magnet program coordinators with teachers directly affected the learning of students and particularly African American students. When magnet coordinators interacted with all teachers, achievement went up, especially in math. What was most interesting was that for schools that did not implement with fidelity, African American male students were negatively affected at a dramatically higher rate.

Curriculum Connections

The MSA has held innovative curricula as one of the five pillars of magnet programs. As far back as 1942, research showed that significant change in student achievement required a significant shift away from the traditional curricula. The Progressive Education Association (PEA) conducted a study between 1930 and 1942 of 30 schools committing to varying degrees of innovation with their curricula. Colleges reported a greater degree of preparation and readiness in students, who attended schools with a greater degree of change from the standard curricula taught in their districts (Ritchie, 1971).

Wilford Aiken wrote in *The Story of the Eight Year Study,* "The first principle was that the general life of the school and methods of teaching should conform to what is known about the ways human beings learn and grow" (Aikin, 1942, as cited in Ritchie, 1971, p. 484). Educators participating in this study found seven methodologies, which supported their student-based curriculum:

1. Cut Across Subject Lines
2. Frequently called for cooperative planning and teaching
3. Called for exploration of a wide range of relationships
4. Provided for experiences valid for large groups
5. Dealt with subject matter which did not require extended drill in specific skills
6. Used larger blocks of time than a single period
7. Used a wide range of source material techniques of gathering information and classroom activities (Ritchie, 1971, p. 485).

Several of the most popular curricula and professional development providers used in magnet schools built their programs around similar goals. According to the MSA, common magnet themes include STEM, fine and performing arts, International Baccalaureate (IB) and international studies, Career and Technical Education (CTE), and world language emersion programs (Magnet Schools of America, 2020b). Additional curriculum models employed in sought after magnet programs include Montessori Schools, Micro-society, Museum Schools, and schools associated with communications and business (Magnet Schools of America, 2020b).

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) emerged in 1962 to meet the needs of the children across Europe to provide a program of study that would provide a

"broader education with some degree of specialization" (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017, p. 8). The focus on instruction in IB schools from the earliest grades through the Diploma Programme is on "critical analysis and learning to learn rather than accumulate encyclopedic knowledge and learning through memorization" (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017, p. 8). By 2016, the IB provided education to 1,250,000 students in 4,538 schools all over the world (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017).

Central to the IBO's approach is the concept of transdisciplinary instruction. Like the practices from the Eight Year Study, the IBO seeks to help students learn concepts across multiple disciplines. The IBO's philosophy on education evolved from the theories of John Dewey, A.S. Neill, Jean Piaget, and Jerome Bruner (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). The combination of these guiding theories results in a program steeped in constructivism. According to the IBO's "MYP: From Principles into Practice," "Constructivism implies a pedagogy that includes student inquiry into concepts through content in authentic global contexts" (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2014, p. 72). The IBO further explained this as approach as, "the interplay between asking (inquiry), doing (action) and thinking (reflection), this constructivist approach leads towards open classrooms where different views and perspectives are valued" (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2014, p. 10).

Similarly STEM or STEAM based programs also seek to put student inquiry at the center of teaching and learning. Discovery Education, a leading STEM/STEAM curricula provider, provides guidance similar to the goals the IBO described in the "Six Structures and Supports for the Inquiry Based Classroom" (Discovery Education, 2020).

They emphasized the importance that teachers create a culture of learning through exploration. They wrote, “Every day needs to be focused on providing students with the type of learning that fosters their innate curiosity for inquiry to succeed.” Thus, exploration and creating understanding through learning experiences becomes the norm and not a special activity (para 11).

Alan November, in *Who Owns the Learning* (2012), discussed the importance to frame learning as relevant, important, and connected to the student’s personal life. His work lectures and professional development were utilized in both IB schools as well as STEM or STEAM focused schools. In his book, November described how to create a collaborative learning focused classroom where students applied their knowledge to a real world task and audience. While the language used by program practitioners of STEM and IB may be slightly different, the underlying philosophy supported long understood truths, that by making the learning student focused and relevant across the curricula, students were more engaged and more likely to create lasting knowledge.

Financing Magnet Schools

Magnet Schools face fiscal challenges in the creation and sustainability of their programs. Funding for magnet programs differs from state to state. While some states, such as Florida, provide additional funding for student achievement in some of the most popular programs such as the Cambridge and IB programs, other states, like California provide no additional per pupil funding for magnet programs.

The situation in Connecticut is described by Hassel and Doyle (2009):

> Charter, magnet and technical schools are funded through a line item in the budget that forces these schools to fight for funding every year. Meanwhile, the

> majority of Connecticut charter and magnet schools serve a disproportionately large number of children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, children the state has already identified in the ECS formula as needing more funding, not less. (2009, p. 20)

California magnet schools also face financial challenges. California's Department of Education stated, "The California Department of Education provides assistance to school districts that want to develop magnet programs. However, the state does not offer special funding for these programs" (California Department of Education, 2020, para 3).

Patricia First pointed to a number of fiscal challenges for magnet programs in her 1990 paper "Educational Choice: Practical Policy Questions." She stated, "The additional costs come from transportation, improved facilities, higher material costs for special programs, additional staff and staff development" (First, 1990, p. 14). These fiscal considerations were the reason Congress created the Magnet Schools Assistance Program Grant (H.R.2392 - Magnet School Assistance Act). Alice Barnes and Linda Wesson (1994) reviewed the effect the end of the MSAP grant had on Forrest City School District's magnet programs. They found, "funding does have a significant effect on achievement gains among third and fourth grade students attending the Forrest City School District in reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies." Further they found, "Student performance showed a decline after funding ended" (p. 94).

In addition to funding challenges, magnet schools can have challenges bringing the innovative curriculum to life in the classroom. While themed programs such as IB and STEM or STEAM signal what could be a dramatic shift away from traditional curriculum, Hausman and Brown (2002) found a lack of significant differences between

magnet and non-magnet curricula. Increasing and maintaining student achievement remains difficult. In fact, the 2014 Magnet Schools Assistance Program Grantee Data Analysis Report demonstrated that despite MSAP funding, “33.4 percent of MSAP schools met annual targets for their MGI performance measures” (Magnet Schools Assistance Program Technical Assistance Center, 2014, p. 1).

Conclusion

Magnet schools have a significant historical purpose as a remedy that school districts across the nation have utilized to stimulate voluntary integration of their schools. Research results on the success of magnet programs at their goal of creating diverse, innovative, and high achieving schools is mixed. Districts where magnet programs have succeeded show a high level of commitment and vision to the development of the curriculum in addition to recruiting students from beyond the school’s attendance zone.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Design Overview

Through this program evaluation I sought to identify the key factors school district leaders must consider when planning the implementation of new magnet programs without the funding assistance of the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant. Using this evaluation, I attempted to identify possible best practices and the critical areas for which support are most needed. I used a participatory action research model to gather data working with participants within the study to create observation tools to be used to further develop their magnet theme within their classrooms. I synthesized data collected from all participant stakeholders to determine what actions the district could take to ensure magnet programs met magnet standards as identified by district leaders and national organizations.

Participants

There were two groups of stakeholders who were critical to my program evaluation. The first group was comprised of district leaders in a school district where several new magnet schools were in the first three years of development. This group was critical as they alone could provide insight into their purposes for creating new magnet programs. This group, including the Director of School Choice and Magnet Programs, the Deputy Superintendent, and the Chief Financial Officer were also able to speak to the supports put into place on the district level, and what they considered to be a successful program.

The next group of stakeholders was principals of schools in the first three years of

magnet program development. As principals, they had to take ownership of the growth of their programs and were attuned to the daily challenges facing new magnet programs. They were able to identify the areas in which they felt supported by the district as well as areas where more assistance could have been provided. The principals also provided a different perspective on their own measures for the success of their program. I gained a deep understanding of the role the district played in establishing magnet programs by seeking the perspective of district leaders.

Data Gathering Techniques

I collected several forms of extant data. I conducted an analysis of state assessment scores at new magnet schools before and after implementation of their programs using data available from the State Department of Education. I collected additional extant data in the form of enrollment data and demographics to determine the impact the magnet programs had on attracting students to enroll in the schools. Enrollment data for the year prior and up to the first three years of program implementation enable me to capture demographic trends over time. I also collected public record data from magnet schools across the United States who were awarded MSAP grants in 2017, the year the district of study was not awarded a grant from MSAP.

Interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with district leaders. I sought to identify the motivations behind the selection of magnet themes and the schools in which to place them. Questions included inquiries into the selection of school-based leaders and budgeting considerations to fund the transformation of the school to reflect the new magnet theme. The interview process with district leaders took between 30 to 45 minutes and I conducted them in person.

Data Analysis Techniques

I utilized a quasi-experimental design to evaluate the impact of the new magnet programs on student achievement and student enrollment.

I utilized a mixed method approach to data collection. I used both quantitative and qualitative data in the analysis of this program. Qualitative data in the form of interviews provided context for the quantitative data. I used extant data that included budgets, marketing and recruitment information, students' test scores, and the district staffing plan to reduce the intrusion of my study on the daily activity of its participants.

Ethical Considerations

The anonymity of the participants was the primary ethical consideration for this program evaluation. The extant assessment data were aggregate and reported by grade level. State and district identifiers were withheld to protect the anonymity of all participants. Because this program evaluation addressed specific details of each school's magnet theme, naming the state assessment test could have exposed the identities of participants; therefore, I withheld that information. Participants in interviews remained anonymous, and I referred to them only by general descriptions. I informed participants of the purpose of my study, and I emphasized the voluntary nature of participation. A copy of the program evaluation was available to all participants.

Limitations

The sample size of this program evaluation was limited by the small number of magnet programs in their first three years of implementation within the chosen school district. There were seven new magnet programs under development in the school district at the time of this study. Further limitations could include my position as one of the

district level supporters of magnet programs within the targeted district. Because my position necessitated building relationships with school leaders and teachers, it is possible that principals did not wish to present negative views of district level support to me. Another possible limitation could have been my bias toward the topic. I have worked in magnet programs for much of my professional career but made every effort to frame inquiries in a dispassionate, neutral tone.

Conclusion

Through the examination of data collected in this study, I aimed to identify the areas where efficient district planning and support throughout the implementation of new programs made a difference in creating quality programs. Interviews of key leaders and district budgets provided insight into the planning, which occurred prior to the creation of the programs within the study. Further, extant data including student enrollment and student achievement on state assessments helped to understand the impact of the magnet program on students.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Findings

In January 2020, the Magnet Schools of America (MSA) recognized three of the schools in this study as Schools of Distinction and one as a School of Excellence. Each of the seven programs in this study have achieved successes in student achievement; however, the challenges they met throughout their implementation may have unnecessarily impeded their progress. Inconsistencies in staffing structures and fiscal support, as well as shifting district and school-based leadership have acted as barriers to the success of each program.

Table 1 below shows the State Standards Assessment (SSA) in reading achievement data for each of the seven schools in the study. The district, as a whole, showed more than a 20% difference in the reading scores of African Americans and their Caucasian counterparts. Across all seven schools, African American students scored considerably below their peers. School A demonstrated high levels of achievement with more than 90% of Asian, Hispanic and Caucasian students scoring satisfactory or above on state assessments; however, there was a noticeable gap in achievement among their African American students. School B and School E, however, showed positive movement on the 2018-2019 achievement scores with a 9.4% jump in achievement in reading and writing combined scores levels among African Americans at School B and a 6% increase in achievement in reading at School E.

Table 1.

*SSA Reading Achievement Scores in First Two Years of Implementation of Magnet Programs**

	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian	Hispanic/ Latino	Black/ African American	Caucasian	Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Multi-Racial
District* 2018-2019	**39.6**	**76.6**	**43.7**	**31.6**	**55**	**N/A**	**48.7**
District* 2017-2018	**39.2**	**77.8**	**42.3**	**29**	**53.4**	**N/A**	**47**
School A 2018-2019	N/A	100	95	73.8	95.7	N/A	83.3
School A 2017-2018	N/A	100	100	72.7	94.6	N/A	N/A
School B 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	39	31.2	51.9	N/A	N/A
School B 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	28.9	21.8	50.9	N/A	N/A
School C 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	41.3	31	47.9	N/A	53.3
School C 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	37.5	28	47	N/A	N/A
School F 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	41.2	40.3	51.8	N/A	35.9
School F 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	41.5	40.9	42	N/A	33.3
School E 2018-2019	N/A	94.3	61.3	35.5	69.4	N/A	70.6
School E 2017-2018	N/A	96.7	57.5	29.5	69.4	N/A	66.7
School D 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	37.5	24.3	56.5	N/A	60.7
School D 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	45.9	26.1	46.2	N/A	51.4
School G 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	37.6	32.1	41.9	N/A	39.6
School G 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	29.3	27.9	43.1	N/A	36.6

Source: data source withheld to protect confidentiality

During the first two years of implementation of magnet programs, the district's scores in mathematics on the SSA, like the reading scores, showed a pronounced achievement gap between African American and Caucasian students. Caucasian students scored 19% higher than African American Students. This gap was present in all schools in this study. The only school showing positive trends toward closing the achievement

gap was School B, which saw an increase of 19.6% among African American students in mathematics scores from the 2017-2018 school year to the 2018-2019 school year.

Table 2.

*SSA Mathematics Achievement Scores in First Two Years of Implementation of Magnet Programs**

	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian	Hispanic/ Latino	Black/ African American	Caucasian	Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Multi-Racial
District* 2018-2019	**39.6**	**76.6**	**43.7**	**31.6**	**55**	**N/A**	**48.7**
District* 2017-2018	**52.7**	**82.9**	**45.7**	**32.3**	**56.8**	**61.7**	**51.4**
School A 2018-2019	N/A	100	100	78.3	96.3	N/A	75
School A 2017-2018	N/A	100	100	76.4	97.1	N/A	N/A
School B 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	50	40.8	49.1	N/A	N/A
School B 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	26.3	21.2	50	N/A	N/A
School C 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	39.8	31	43.8	N/A	64.3
School C 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	42.2	39	56	N/A	N/A
School F 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	42	35.1	56.4	N/A	34.2
School F 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	41.5	40.9	42	N/A	28.2
School E 2018-2019	N/A	97.1	59	38.4	74.1	N/A	83.7
School E 2017-2018	N/A	100	61	43.6	76.7	N/A	78.1
School D 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	49.6	28.7	61.1	N/A	72.4
School D 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	43.9	27.1	47.5	N/A	51.4
School G 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	42.5	41.2	48.1	N/A	36.7
School G 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	40.1	28.9	47.7	N/A	36.6

* Source: data source withheld to protect confidentiality

Across the district, Caucasian students scored 29% higher in science than their African American peers and higher than 16.4% of their Hispanic/Latino peers. Despite the high level of emphasis on sciences in the STEAM programs, African American students at the six STEAM schools in this study scored significantly lower than the

district average. School B, despite showing significant growth in both reading and math, showed a 37.1% gap in achievement between African American students and Caucasian counterparts. School A remained the highest achieving school in the study; however, School F's students came the closest to closing the achievement gap with only an 11.5% difference between African American students and Caucasian students. School C students did not participate in science assessments as the State Comprehensive Assessment Test (SCAT) tested only fifth and eighth grade students. School C did not offer fifth or eighth grade. School F's scores reflected both fifth and eighth grade assessments.

Table 3.

*SCAT Science Achievement Scores in First Two Years of Implementation of Magnet Programs**

	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian	Hispanic/ Latino	Black/ African American	Caucasian	Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Multi-Racial
District 2018-2019	**62.5**	**83.8**	**44.3**	**31.7**	**60.7**	**72**	**53.7**
District 2017-2018	**62**	**81.2**	**19.1**	**32.2**	**61.3**	**58.6**	**53.5**
School A 2018-2019	N/A	100	N/A	69.6	94	N/A	N/A
School A 2017-2018	N/A	100	N/A	53.3	92.9	N/A	N/A
School B 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	35.7	17.4	54.5	N/A	N/A
School B 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	33.3	11.1	57.1	N/A	N/A
School C* 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
School C* 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
School F 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	41.2	40.3	51.8	N/A	35.9
School F 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	41.5	40.9	42	N/A	33.3
School E 2018-2019	N/A	100	60.3	27.9	71.2	N/A	57.1
School E 2017-2018	N/A	92.3	58.6	27.3	72.7	N/A	63.6
School D 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	30.2	17.5	46.3	N/A	54.5
School D 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	43.3	19.7	36.2	N/A	25
School G 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	40	22.1	39	N/A	30.8
School G 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	29.1	21.5	47.4	N/A	28.5

*Source: data source withheld to protect confidentiality

In addition to student achievement, the district sought to increase student enrollment as a primary goal of implementing magnet programs in the schools selected to offer STEAM. All seven schools in the study were under enrolled prior to the implementation of their new magnet program. Each school had over 100 open seats to reach their capacity during their second year of implementation.

School A, already an established magnet program with waiting lists for enrollment each year, remained under enrolled by principal choice. The principal designated empty classes to provide magnet theme specific elective options, including a computer lab, makerspace, and two science labs. Due to changes in the enrollment model, the school's extra classroom space was to be utilized to accommodate additional enrollment.

The Inventory of School Houses (ISH) report indicated the number of student seats available at each school site. This number was the brick and mortar capacity at the school. At some schools, additional portables increased the total capacity at the school. School districts in the state of the district under study reported the enrollment up to 90% of capacity because all schools enrolled under 90% of capacity were available for controlled open enrollment. Controlled open enrollment is the practice of allowing parents to enroll their students in any school, even across school districts, when space is available at the school of choice. The district in the study provided this option at schools with less than 90% enrollment.

The number of students who applied to attend these programs was not promising. School A, one of the first magnet programs in the district with a reputation spanning nearly 20 years, saw a dramatic drop in the number of applications in their second year of implementing the STEAM program. The enrollment was down 37% from the 2017-2018 to 2018-2019 school year. School D also saw a 38% drop in applications. The only school in the study showing a notable increase in student applications for enrollment was School E where applications increased by 19%. Table 4 illustrates these data.

Table 4.

Magnet School Enrollment and School Capacity

School	Current	Brick and Mortar Capacity	Portable	Total Capacity	%Brick and Mortar Capacity	Percent total capacity	Seats to give for 90%	Seats to give for 100%	#Apply
School A 2019-2019	713	822	0	822	86.7	86.7	27	109	461
School A* 2017-2018	683	822	0	822	83.1	83.1	56	139	731
School B 2019-2019	413	686	0	686	60.2	60.2	205	273	59
School B 2017-2018	398	686	0	686	58	58	220	288	62
School C 2019-2019	821	872	94	966	94.1	85	48	145	24
School C 2017-2018	832	872	94	966	95.4	86.1	37	134	50
School F 2019-2019	833	1174	0	1174	70.9	70.9	223.6	341	26
School F 2017-2018	796	1174	0	1174	67.8	70.9	260.6	378	30
School E 2019-2019	1060	1364	110	1463	77.71	72.45	256	403	199
School E 2017-2018	1085	1364	110	1463	79.54	74.16	258	378	166
School D 2019-2019	811	995	0	995	81.5	81.5	84.5	184	69
School D 2017-2018	842	995	0	995	84.6	84.6	53.5	153	110
School G 2018-2019	1128	1260	22	1280	89.5	88.1	132	152	30
School G 2017-2018	1101	1260	22	1280	89.5	86	51	179	30

Note. * Data based on available capacity information. The number of portable seats could be smaller in these data as it is unclear whether removed portables were included in the total capacity.

Source: Source: data source withheld to protect confidentiality

The demographics of student enrollment across each of the seven schools lacked notable change over the two-year period of initial magnet program implementation.

Student enrollment in the district over these two years remained consistent with Caucasian students remaining the largest subgroup over the two years, representing 49% of the total student enrollment. African American students represented approximately 20% of total enrollment and Hispanics/Latinos represented just above 20% of the enrollment. Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and mixed-race students made up the remainder of district enrollment. Table 5 illustrates these data.

Table 5.

Enrollment in First Two Years of Implementation of Magnet Programs Disaggregated by Race

	American Indian/ Alaskan Native	Asian	Hispanic/ Latino	Black/ African American	Caucasian	Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	Multi-Racial
District 2018-2019	**0.4**	**1.6**	**23.9**	**19.7**	**49**	**0.2**	**5.2**
District 2017-2018	**.4**	**1.7**	**22.6**	**20.2**	**49.8**	**.2**	**5.1**
School A 2018-2019	N/A	11.9	7.5	18.3	56.8	N/A	5.1
School A 2017-2018	N/A	11	6.3	17.5	59.3	N/A	5.1
School B 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	22.8	44.1	27.5	N/A	5.3
School B 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	21.1	45.2	27.9	N/A	5.8
School C* 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	45.9	20.7	26.2	N/A	5.7
School C* 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	42.5	21.5	29.8	N/A	4.1
School F 2018-2019	N/A	1.2	43.2	24.2	26.2	N/A	4.7
School F 2017-2018	N/A	1.3	38.2	27	26.9	N/A	5.7
School E 2018-2019	N/A	6.8	19.5	35.8	31.8	N/A	5.7
School E 2017-2018	N/A	5.5	18.2	34.8	34.8	N/A	6.1
School D 2018-2019	N/A	N/A	20.5	30	43.6	N/A	5.1
School D 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	20	29.8	44.7	N/A	4.8
School G 2018-2019	N/A	1.2	21.7	19.8	51.2	N/A	5.5
School G 2017-2018	N/A	N/A	20.3	18.3	55.4	N/A	4.2

Source: data source withheld to protect confidentiality

As-Is Framework

In this section, I presented a snapshot of the context, culture, conditions, and competencies which existed within the district during the planning stages for the new magnets as well as during the time of the study. Study findings showed areas in which increased attention may have improved outcomes at one or more programs within the study. A diagram illustrating the connection between these four arenas of change is included in Appendix A.

Context. As school districts across the nation began to respond to an increasing number of desegregation lawsuits throughout the 1970s and 1980s, they began to create magnet programs as a method to avoid redistricting and forced busing of students across districts. The practice of rezoning students to attend schools other than their neighborhood schools proved to be both costly and unpopular (Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2012). Communities across the nation responded negatively toward forced busing, and the districts incurred heavy costs by transporting students across districts to leave segregated communities to attend forcefully segregated schools (Olson, 1993). While Virginia was the only state along the eastern seaboard of the United States not to require the aid of the National Guard to enforce desegregation laws, it is a gross misstatement to say that the white community welcomed integration. During the late 1950s Virginia launched an opposition to the forced desegregation dubbed the “Massive Resistance” which saw the state shutdown white schools in Norfolk, Front Royal, and Charlottesville (Olson, 1993). While the courts would eventually overturn these acts, they were indicative of the response to desegregation throughout the nation.

As early as 1967, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights recognized the need to compile the most promising trends leading to integration in the nation's largest cities. Dentler and Elsberry, in their paper, "Big City Desegregation – Trends and Methods" cautioned districts developing magnet schools to address the inherent stresses the creation of magnet programs created: "These include public claims of unfair admission practices; disenchantment with non-magnet school offerings; and new strains in the personnel policies on recruitment, assignment, and salary" (1967, p. 7). They cautioned against the tacking on of "Academies" to the existing school structure, a practice commonly referred to as a School-Within-a-School by magnet school practitioners.

Despite the skepticism and cautions from U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, the concept of magnet programs appealed to districts and families alike. Districts would create and fund a few select schools with a specialized program rather than providing transportation across an entire district. Parents were able to self-select these specialized magnet schools, creating immediate parent buy-in, and eliminating the negativity resulting from the perceived loss of traditional neighborhood schools (Dentler & Elsberry, 1967). Parents were willing to allow their children to attend these new, highly diverse schools if it meant they would now receive a highly innovative, specialized program that met the needs of their students.

By 1985, magnet programs had become a significant remedy districts employed to desegregate. In recognition of the stresses the magnet program created on districts, the federal government, as an amendment to the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA), created the Federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) in 1976, providing grants to magnet schools (Siegel-Hawley & Frankenberg, 2012). Since 1985, the federal

government has offered highly competitive grant cycles. Since 2009, Congress has appropriated nearly $700 million for districts across the nation to create or significantly revise magnet programs through their authorization of their Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA). Through the MSAP grant, 78 districts in 23 states have received federal support (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary & Secondary Education, 2019). While these funds represented significant support from the federal government, districts not awarded funding had to find resources within already stressed budgets to support the development of new programs. MSAP recipients, while supported during the development stage, had to also find the means to support these programs once they had completed the grant cycle.

State funding formulae through full time equivalency (FTE) differed from state to state. At least one state provided a weighted FTE allocation for students passing assessments in college level courses offered through the Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge Assessment of International Education (AICE), and the International Baccalaureate (IB) (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The state allocated funds to schools offering these accelerated courses and their districts in order to maintain the programs and prepare students, especially those who were economically disadvantaged, to participate in a high-quality college focused education.

A fifth of the states seemed to provide a pathway for support through a variety of measures designed specifically to increase the number of college and career ready students. Other states specifically asserted that no funds would be allocated for the support of magnet programs. Districts in these states had to seek alternative funding options. Districts and schools had explored programs to support the implementation of

their programs, including utilization of Title funds, including Title I, Title II, and Title IV Part A (Peterson, 1983).

While Congress continued to fund the MSAP through the 2019 prospective budget, Secretary of the Department of Education, Betsy DeVos, eliminated funding for promise neighborhoods and full-service community schools. The concept behind promise neighborhoods was to provide full-service support for students holistically by changing their environment through the support of non-profit entities (Congressional Research Service, 2019). Full service community schools, like promise neighborhoods sought to provide safety nets for students in low-income neighborhoods which would "provide comprehensive academic, social, and health services for students, students' family members, and community members that will result in improved educational outcomes for children" (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

Additionally, she included new language in the grant program, which would reverse a decades-old rule preventing districts to utilize MSAP funds for transporting students to achieve desegregation goals. This language conflicted with the U.S. Congress's reauthorization of the MSAP, which prevented the use of grant funds for transportation since its inception. Additionally, she proposed the complete elimination of Title IV Parts A and B, Title II Part A, in her 2019 budget request (National Education Association, 2019). The elimination of these programs could have been a red flag for districts planning future magnet schools, as the federal administration at the time seemed to be seeking to reduce funding across the entire budget.

The rise of the accountability movement further complicated the development of magnet programs. In response to national initiatives beginning with the No Child Left

Behind (NCLB) revision to President Johnson's initial Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, states increased the pressure on schools to raise achievement levels as measured by state assessments. The No Child Left Behind Act forced school districts across the nation to report on and address the results of student assessments of state standards by demographic sub-groups. States created rating systems to identify schools in need of reform based on assessment scores. Leaders in education, such as Diane Ravitch, responded to the exposure of shocking achievement gaps with a cry for using competition as a strategy for school reform. In a 1997 article in *Forbes* magazine, she touted charter schools as a palatable alternative to failing public schools. She struck out at opponents to charter schools by implying their opposition was less about public school improvement and more about preserving inequities in economic strata (Ravitch, 1997, pp. 82-83). She called for more competition in the public school sector to encourage school improvement, as that competition would force schools to fight for parents' attention and support.

The belief in competition as a prod to forcing public schools to address long-standing inadequacies led to the rise in charter schools and publicly funded vouchers to private schools—two reforms supported enthusiastically by Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos. Additionally, 47 states and the District of Columbia had enacted policies opening enrollment beyond the traditional neighborhood zoned school (Education Commission of the States, 2018).

In the face of these new competitors, districts were utilizing magnet programs as a public school-choice option, often placing the magnet program at a school as a reform strategy to address low achievement levels. Bifulco, Cobb, and Bell (2009) conducted a

study using longitudinal data to estimate the effects of Connecticut's inter-district magnet programs on reading and math achievement. They found that inter-district magnet schools at the high school level showed positive effects in both reading and math scores and that inter-district magnet programs at the middle school level showed positive effects in reading. Interestingly, the findings showed these positive impacts regardless of the level of reduction of racial isolation at the high school level. At the middle school level, students' results were limited where the program did not achieve significant reduction in racial isolation (Bifulco et al., 2009).

The district in my study, when faced with the opportunity to apply for the MSAP grant, chose six schools. Five of these schools showed academic achievement in need of improvement. The district leaders identified a seventh school for magnet designation, at the same time, to be a direct feeder school to one of the IB Diploma Programmes at one of the high schools. Of the seven new magnet programs in the district, only the two schools undergoing revisions to their existing magnet programs showed consistent academic achievement in reading, mathematics, and science. At all of the five schools with new magnet designations, reading proficiency hovered at under 40% for the two years prior to selection for magnet designation. Table 6 illustrates the baseline achievement data prior to magnet program implementation

Table 6.

Student Achievement Prior to Magnet Designation

2016 State Standards Assessment (ELA/Math) 2016 SCAT 2.0 (Science)						
Percent of Students Passing (Scoring Level 3 {Proficient} or Above)						
	ELA 2016	ELA 2015	Math 2016	Math 2015	Science 2016	Science* 2015
School A ES**	94%	93%	97%	95%	98%	99%
School B ES	34%	41%	33%	26%	33%	38%
School C ES (K-4)	35%	39%	30%	36%	N/A	N/A
School F (grades 5-8)	35%	43%	30%	40%	37%	36%
School E MS**	59%	61%	63%	67%	55%	57%
School G (International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme)	34%	36%	36%	39%	33%	32%
School D MS	38%	41%	37%	37%	43%	35%

Source: data source withheld to protect confidentiality

District leaders chose the theme of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematic (STEAM) for six of the new programs, building on the experiences of the Deputy Superintendent and the program specialist leading the effort. They had successfully created a STEM program in a neighboring district. Adding the A in STEAM tapped into a wave of support for the arts in the district, a particular interest of the School Board chair. Through the STEAM theme, teachers would be able to make connections to the existing and successful Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs across the district.

The School Board, Chamber of Commerce, and district curriculum and instruction offices in this study valued the CTE programs. Due to the district's agrarian history, for many generations students left high school and went straight to work on the family farm. Many families in the district still saw high school as the terminal point for their children's formal education. School district leaders responded by providing a wide range of

programs in which students could earn certifications in order to start work immediately after graduation.

All district high schools offered CTE classes as well as CTE academies, which operated similarly to a school within a school (SWS) magnet program. These academies afforded students the opportunity to achieve a variety of industry certifications. The Executive Director of CTE worked closely with the local Chamber of Commerce to tailor the programs offered to meet the needs of businesses which the Chamber members were courting to move to the area. This close partnership was critical as 77% of the students served came from economically disadvantaged home environments (Department of Education, 2020).

The district planners intended the six STEAM schools to tap into that close relationship with the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses in the same way that the CTE programs were finding success. The MSAP grant would help to create a department through which this work could be accomplished. The CTE department, at the time of the creation of the six STEAM programs and the planning year for the new IB Middle Years Programme (MYP) included the addition of a new Director of Career and Technical Education, a coordinator, an executive secretary, an additional secretary, a data clerk, and a program specialist (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Three years later, the CTE department grew to include an Executive Director, a coordinator, a program specialist, and nine program facilitators (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality). Many of these positions were funded through Perkins grant funds as well as a tax referendum approved by the voters in the community. At the same time, the School Board approved a Director of Student Assignments, School Choice, and

Magnet Programs and added a coordinator position to the staffing plan. However, despite the magnet programs existing at all high schools, half of the middle schools, and six of the elementary schools, no additional staffing was added to the Student Assignment, School Choice and Magnet Programs staffing plan to support the curriculum needs of these programs.

Culture. In 2016, the community elected a new superintendent intent on carrying out a number of reforms across many different programs. She added a new Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum to her team who had experience in turn around schools and magnet school programs as well as charter schools. As part of the reform efforts, the new superintendent made significant changes to the district staff in the Curriculum and Instruction Department, as well as administrators at school sites across the district, recruiting many new district leaders from larger districts across the state (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The result of the staffing changes was widespread shifts across the district, including 23 principal changes in 2017, and new directors in Secondary Instruction, Elementary Instruction, Teaching and Learning, Professional Development, and Counseling and Student Assessment. The superintendent created three new principals on assignment positions to provide mentoring and direct assistance to principals across the district. The new leadership team brought back a retired principal to lead the new Student Assignment, School Choice, and Records department, which would include all magnet programs under its umbrella.

Of the seven new magnet programs, six received new principals in 2017 just ahead of the first implementation year. These included School B whose new principal had a history of success leading a small community charter elementary school but had never

led a large public elementary school and School F whose principal was new to the position. School C and School G had principal changes as district directors were repositioned as principals during the transformation of the district office.

In an interview with the Deputy Superintendent of Schools, he admitted that magnet school theme had not been a consideration in placing administrators up until the present year. He stated, "[Placement of administrators in magnet schools] hasn't been [considered] because there was no established identity. It is now and it has [to be]" (Personal communication, March 27, 2019). He went on to discuss placing principals with explicit knowledge of programs at the schools that offered those programs for the coming year.

By January 2017, the superintendent, along with the new leadership staff planned for significant changes to the enrollment processes of the two existing magnet programs within the district (Personal communication, July 30, 2019). The superintendent had already reorganized the Student Assignment and Records Office to include school choice and specifically magnet programs. For the first time, district support for magnet programs was designated to a specific office prior to the submission of the district's MSAP grant application. The MSAP grant was highly competitive, requiring rigorous planning and evidence to support the district's plan and needs assessment. Another change involved creating new enrollment policies for the two existing elementary magnet programs. Prior to the 2016-2017 school year, students wishing to attend one of the district's two magnet programs took placement tests. The Superintendent described the practice in which students were ranked by race and test scores (Personal communication, August 15, 2019). This policy directly violated the Supreme Court's decision in Parents Involved in

Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1 specifically identifying any enrollment practices based on race as unconstitutional (2007).

The exclusive enrollment policy at the two elementary schools, which restricted enrollment to students who achieved a high score on a gifted screener, created a statistical anomaly in the district for student achievement. The district touted these two schools as highly successful, and national organizations such as Blue Ribbon Schools also recognized them across the nation for their high achievement. The comparison to other schools in the district, which took all students regardless of ability, was unequal from the beginning.

Conditions. The district in this study initially created magnet programs as a remedy to a 1978 judgment finding the district had failed to integrate its schools racially. The federal court ordered the creation of a magnet program to alleviate minority group isolation at two schools. However, despite urgings from the federal government to consider the implications of building new schools, early in the 1990s the School Board constructed ten new elementary schools, two new middle schools and a new high school. One school was created to be a magnet school, bringing the total number of magnet programs to two (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

As late as 2004, the federal government ruled against the district's application for unitary status because the district had not operated in good faith, failing to desegregate its schools fully, resulting in a modified decree. Under the new ruling, the School Board was to create a second magnet program for elementary schools with a theme of science, math, and technology. The creation of this magnet program merged two racially homogenous zones previously split with another area elementary school and created a "Walk-In Area"

for families within a specified zone who would not have to apply for the magnet program (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). It is this “Walk-In Zone” which the district reinstated for the 2020-2021 school year.

The United States District Court granted the district unitary status in January of 2007. After the 2004 modified decree, the district implemented court mandates to standardize student assignment procedures for out of area students. The United States District Court recommended the following actions:

1. Only full-time employees of the School District (no non-School District Personnel)
2. Only students in grades Pre-K through 5
3. Transfers having no negative effect on desegregation at the sending or receiving school
4. Limit transfer to employee's place of employment or, in the case of non-school-based employees, limit to the nearest elementary school site to employee's place of employment
5. Enrollment at the (name withheld) Elementary School. School A, or School E magnet schools, as well as the EMIT Program at (name withheld) High School, the IB Program at (name withheld) High School, and the arts program at (name withheld) High School (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality)

From 2004-2007 through the implementation of court rotation required policies, the district eliminated *de jure* segregation resulting from previous policies and procedures. In the 2007 decree granting unitary status, the court cited a report on the district’s progress

by Dr. Christine Rossell, an expert on education policy and author of *School Desegregation in the 21st Century.* She stated, “(Name withheld) schools are desegregated to the extent practicable;" and the "(Name withheld) schools are more desegregated than most other school districts that have achieved unitary status since 1986” (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality).

By 2011 the district required gifted screening for students to attend both existing elementary magnet programs. This practice led to a perception among the community that magnet programs were only for advanced students. The creation of accelerated magnet programs at each of the district high schools further cemented community perceptions.

In 2017, the district proposed to apply for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) Grant, creating four new magnet schools and revising the theme of two existing programs. The proposal included a removal of the gifted status requirement for both highly successful magnet programs and removing barriers for equitable access to high achieving schools. However, the lack of transportation provided to out of area students continued to act as a barrier for lower income families who lived in other parts of the district.

The four new STEAM magnet programs maintained their residential zones but also opened seats for out of area students to attend. The district selected these schools due to their locations at the extreme northern and southern ends of the district’s boundaries. The district’s size, over 1,500 square miles, made participation in the more centrally located magnet programs prohibitive, due to the lack of transportation provided to students who lived out of the magnet schools’ areas. To remove the transportation barrier,

district leaders proposed the creation of a magnet elementary and middle school at either end of the district. These schools would create feeder patterns to existing accelerated high school programs in their areas. School G's MYP benefitted from the same logic. By placing a high-quality, highly respected program with existing name recognition within the district, more students who would have been prohibited from participation due to lack of transportation, would be able to attend.

In addition to creating equitable access, the four new STEAM magnet programs and the new IB MYP magnet program would address persistent low academic achievement. The increased professional development and resources would support teachers and students to increase student engagement, thereby increasing achievement on state assessments. Student test scores in 2016 for state assessments in English/language arts, mathematics, and science at School B, School C, School F, and School D showed drops in achievement. Table 7 illustrates the achievement levels based on state assessments for the seven magnet schools in the district in 2015 and 2016.

Table 7.

Achievement Data Magnet Cohort 2016

2016 Standards Assessment (ELA/Math) 2016 FCAT 2.0 (Science)						
Percent of Students Passing (Scoring Level 3 {Proficient} or Above)						
	ELA 2016	ELA 2015	Math 2016	Math 2015	Science 2016	Science* 2015
School A ES**	94%	93%	97%	95%	98%	99%
School B ES	34%	41%	33%	26%	33%	38%
School C ES (K-4)	35%	39%	30%	36%	N/A	N/A
School F (grades 5-8)	35%	43%	30%	40%	37%	36%
School E MS**	59%	61%	63%	67%	55%	57%
School G (International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme)	34%	36%	36%	39%	33%	32%
School D MS	38%	41%	37%	37%	43%	35%

**Schools existing as magnet schools prior to the implementation of new magnet programs.
Source: data source withheld to protect anonymity

It is likely that the low student achievement caused students assigned to these schools through neighborhood zoning to seek alternative options, resulting in declining enrollment in all schools but the existing elementary magnet program. Table 8 shows student enrollment compared to the available seats at each school at the time of the decision to place magnet themes at these schools (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). In the table, “brick and mortar capacity” refers to the official capacity as measured by the State Inventory of School Houses (ISH) report. The table below illustrates the additional seats available given the addition of onsite portable classrooms.

Table 8.

Enrollment Data October 2016-2017

School	Current enrollment	Brick and Mortar Capacity	Portable	Total Capacity	% Brick and Mortar Capacity	Percent total capacity*	Seats to 90%	Seats to give for 100%
School A*	647	822	0	822	78.7	78.7	92	175
School B	362	686	0	686	52.7	52.7	255	324
School C	767	872	94	966	87.9	79.4	102.4	199
School D	832	995	0	995	83.6	83.6	63.5	163
School E Middle	1078	1364						
School F	849	1174	0	1174	72.3	72.3	201.6	325
School G	1070	1260	22	1280	84.9	83.5	82	210

*The percent of total capacity was derived by dividing the number of students enrolled by the number of total seats available, including seats provided through the addition of portable classrooms. Seats to 90% were the total number of students who could enroll to achieve 90% enrollment. Schools which were less than 90% enrolled remained open for controlled open enrollment.
Source: data source withheld to protect anonymity

The logic model presented to the School Board prior to the submission of the MSAP grant included actions, which would later become recommendations by the Department of Education for the implementation of new magnet schools. The logic model presented by the Director of Elementary Education and the soon to be Director of Student Assignment and Magnet Programs, included separate plans to address the needs of elementary and middle schools, as well as a plan to provide district support (Appendix C).

Members of the curriculum and instruction leadership team planned to create a magnet lead teacher position at each of the six schools. The magnet lead teacher would work weekly with teachers on the integration of the magnet theme with district approved, standards-based curriculum. The creation of the magnet lead teacher position was a standard practice in schools across the nation applying for the MSAP grant. Of the 32 districts receiving MSAP funds in 2017, nearly every application included school based

staff tasked with the development of the program both through curriculum development as well as through efforts to market the new program and recruit new students (National Archives, 2016).

Additionally, the target district planned to create three full time, grant-funded, positions to direct the professional development on the magnet theme, educate the community on the new program, and conduct the new magnet lottery system. The district's plans were aligned with district plans across the nation, identifying the need for individuals to not only coordinate professional development and public relations work, but also to monitor for the quality of the programs as they grew through each implementation phase. Table 9 illustrates the alignment of the district's proposed plan with implementation plans of districts receiving the MSAP grant during the same grant cycle for which the district applied. While a few of the applications appeared to be somewhat ambiguous on the funding source for key positions in their narratives, the clear majority funded both district and school level staff through the MSAP grant. Interestingly, the most common funding structure appeared to be an existing magnet or school choice director hiring a fully MSAP funded project manager and assistant project manager who were 100% dedicated to the development of the magnet programs at the schools within the project (National Archives, 2016). Essentially, this would mean that there would be district level support dedicated to this project exclusively and supporting a small cohort of schools.

Additionally, a common theme throughout all applications across the nation for the MSAP grant was the need for qualified and dedicated site-based support to conduct the many new duties a developing magnet school must achieve. The individuals hired in

these positions would have the daily responsibility to support academic achievement through rich theme-specific curriculum integration, strengthen family and community partnerships, and recruit new students to meet recruitment goals. While many of the applications referred to these positions as lead teachers, the descriptions of these positions often cited the magnet lead teacher as a member of school-based leadership (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement 2018).

Based on my review of the grant applications of all MSAP grant awardees, I noted that most districts included one magnet specific position at the site level in their MSAP grant application. However, districts such as Longview Independent School District and Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools created two positions at each school to ensure the development of the curriculum and recruiting efforts received dedicated time and expertise. Other site-based positions included in the grants were instructional coaches, technology teachers, other content specific teachers, and family and community involvement contacts.

In each MSAP grant application, the district's MSAP team described the need for the new programs and the difficulty the district would have in creating these programs without the benefit of federal funding. Each district cited the need to alleviate student achievement gaps existing among demographic sub-groups and specifically among African America students. Additionally, each application described the district's efforts to reduce minority isolation in schools by using the new magnet programs to draw students from beyond neighborhood boundaries. The 2017 MSAP grant application's new rules allowed districts to utilize federal funds to offset transportation costs for the first time in the history of the grant. The Federal Register in the grant request for proposal

(RFP) stated that transportation may be included, "provided the transportation costs are sustainable and the costs do not constitute a significant portion of grant funds" (National Archives, 2016). Houston Independent Schools utilized this new rule to plan for the increased costs associated with transporting students to schools outside their zones.

Table 9.

Comparison of District Plan with MSAP Awarded Districts

	Number of new Magnets	Number District Based Employees	Number Site Based Positions	Year 1 funding granted	Total expected funding
Studied District	**6**	**6**	**6**	**$0**	**Not Awarded**
Albuquerque Public Schools	5	2	5	$1,965,800	$7,830,627
Board of Education City of Chicago	5	3	5	$2,672,187	$14,963,921
Board of Education of Baltimore County	5	4	5	$3,765,452	$15,000,000
Capital Region Education Council	4	2	6	$3,089,295	$14,777,760
Champaign Community Unit School District #4	3	3	6	$2,174,210	$9,690,816
Clark County School District	3	5	3	$1,791,055	$14,829,400
CodeRVA Regional High School	1	4	5	$1,177,313	$5,992,078
DeSoto Independent School District	5	7	*	$2,609,582	$14,997,673
East Baton Rouge Parish Public School System	4	10	4	$2,831,930	$14,931,594
Florence County School District Three	5	2	3	$2,708,298	$9,103,423
Houston Independent School District*	6	2	6	$3,695,909	$14,998,280
IDEA Public Schools	4	1	*	$1,432,895	$14,999,444
Lansing School District	6	3	6	$2,999,980	$14,998,948
LEARN	5	*	5	$3,297,073	$14,991,098
Longview Independent School District	5	0	10	$3,315,930	$14,838,379
Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools	5	3	10	$1,730,396	$14,999,599
Napa Valley Unified School District	5	3	20	$2,447,916	$10,121,928
New Haven, City of DBA New Haven Public School System	5	4	9	$2,997,763	$14,993,125
NYC Department of	5	2	5	$2,980,000	$14,900,000

Education – Community School District 11					
NYC Department of Education – Community School District 28	5	2	5	$2,950,000	$14,925,000
NYC Department of Education – Community School District 6	5	2	5	$2,985,000	$14,925,000
Palmdale School District	5	1	5	$3,195,184	$14,989,263
Pasadena Unified School District	5	1	17	$3,566,322	$14,478,893
Richland County School District #1	4	1	34	$1,860,074	$14,985,558
School Board of Miami-Dade County, FL	3	4	3	$3,157,264	$15,000,000
School District of Lee County	5	3	9	$2,227,839	$10,239,712
St. Lucie Public Schools	3	2	4	$2,669,496	$12,541,533
Texarkana Arkansas School District	3	5	5	$3,015,437	$14,787,921
Wake County Public School System	4	3	11	$4,245,022	$14,871,801

*Houston Independent Schools included transportation as part of their grant project.
Source: U. S. Department of Education (2019)

The U. S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement announced the recipients of the MSAP grant awards in the second quarter of the 2017-2018 school year. Principals in the district under study had already introduced the new magnet theme to their staffs and students at each of the six STEAM schools. However, the district was not a recipient of the MSAP grant award. When the district did not receive the anticipated grant funding, the directors of elementary and secondary education proposed to utilize Title IV Part A funding, specifically designed to support a "well-rounded" learning environment, to fund some of the initially planned initiatives.

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement published the Magnet School Development Framework (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation & Improvement, 2019). The initial funding requested from the MSAP grant included a magnet lead teacher position at each school to support

the STEAM theme development at the school site. This position would translate the STEAM framework into a message in keeping with the school culture, learning experiences, and expectations. The magnet lead teacher in this position would also create family and community partnerships and lead the marketing and recruitment effort.

In addition to the magnet lead teacher, the magnet grant coordinator would use the MSAP grant to fund positions for two magnet school specialists. One would support art and music in the magnet schools. The second specialist would coordinate with the student assignment office to oversee magnet enrollment, placement, marketing, parent involvement, reporting, data collection, and evaluation. A marketing specialist position would be created to assist with the marketing and public relations for all of the new magnet programs and to support the existing public relations director. Table 10 illustrates the budget plan included in the MSAP grant application.

Table 10.

*Magnet Schools Assistance Program Five Year Budget Plan**

	Yr.1	Yr.2	Yr.3	Yr. 4	Yr. 5	Grand Total
Salaries	$644,065	$663,388	$682,662	$703,144	$724,240	$3,417,499
Fringe	$644,065	$663,388	$628,662	$703,144	$724,240	$3,417,49
Travel	$56,482	$56,482	$56,482	$56,482	$56,482	$282,410
Equipment	$194,720	$231,024	$231,024	$0	$0	$656,768
Supplies	$671,873	$608,623	$583,231	$1,182,801	$1,155,010	$4,201,538
Contractual	$747,600	$747,600	$747,600	$747,600	$747,600	$747,600
Other	$82,600	$82,600	$82,600	$62,600	$62,600	$373,000
Total Direct Costs	$2,862,833	$2,861,347	$2,861,347	$2,836,878	$2,836,880	$14,259,285
Total Indirect Costs	$137,167	$138,653	$138,653	$163,122	$163,120	$740,715
Training Stipends	$261,000	$261,000	$261,000	$261,000	$261,000	$1,203,000
Training Fringe	$3,000,000	$3,000,000	$3,000,000	$3,000,000	$3,000,000	$15,000,000

Source: source withheld to protect confidentiality

After district administrators were notified that they were not recipients of the MSAP grant, development of the programs came into question. Because the Director of Student Assignment and School Choice had already promised the programs to the School Board and the community, district leaders and school-based administrators felt pressure to make the project work, despite a complete lack of dedicated funding. Four of the of the schools in the project were already designated as magnet programs, despite their varying levels of success. School B had a Cambridge AICE Elementary Program, which had been put in place to feed students to the program at Middle School D's AICE program and ultimately, the High Schools AICE program fed by Middle School D. School A was transformed into a magnet school as a remedy to improve diversity in district schools as a result of the desegregation order. The School Board designated School E to be a magnet school and placed an IB MYP there to attract a diverse population and to help the school recruit students to increase enrollment.

As these four schools were already existing magnet programs, district administrators had already allotted extra resources and staffing to meet the needs. For School B, School D, and School E, additional support in the form of magnet funding was allocated to their annual school budgets. State funding allocation structures, which rewarded schools with additional Full Time Equivalent (FTE) dollars for every AICE and IB international assessment passed, as well as an additional award for each AICE or IB diploma awarded, provided the district with additional funds to build feeder programs for these advanced study options. School E received three additional magnet positions in the 2017-2018 district budget (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Because the law providing additional funding for IB and AICE programs specified that 20% of funds could be used to support feeder programs, the district finance office personnel interpreted this to mean programs in the same magnet stream. This meant only IB schools would benefit from funds generated from IB assessments and only AICE programs would benefit from funds generated from AICE assessments (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality). School A and another elementary magnet school in the district not part of the study, as neither AICE nor IB programs, did not receive any additional funding.

Though School A did not receive additional magnet funding, the school's long-held policy to screen all incoming students for possible giftedness along with its 100% application enrollment, created a culture of elitism. The school received thousands of dollars in parental funding and established its own foundation. Additionally, district administrators allocated three additional staffing units for School A for their magnet program in the district staffing plan (Citation withheld to preserve confidentiality).

School F and School C, however, did not receive any additional support prior to their magnet designation. So, when the MSAP grant funds did not become available in September 2017, and the board had already approved the district budget and staffing plans, there was no additional support available for the two newest magnet schools in the district. In addition to the lack of support in place, their locations in the far southwestern region of the district created additional challenges for the schools. With no additional funding for marketing and recruitment, and no additional staff to spearhead that effort, it began to seem unlikely that the schools would succeed in creating quality STEAM magnet programs.

In fall of 2017, the state released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Title IV Part A funding. Districts could utilize Title IV Part A funding to support enrichment programs, safe and healthy schools, and increase teachers' effective use of technology. The district's $379,104 allocation for 2017 meant that the district could contract with Discovery Education to provide professional development and teacher coaching at each school as well as some curriculum materials to support the STEAM focus (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality). The limited funding meant that district leaders eliminated school-based magnet lead teacher positions and district support personnel. Title IV Part A funding could not be utilized for marketing purposes, so schools would have to utilize general funds to market their programs.

Another consequence of the lack of funding included the elimination of School A and School E in the Discovery Education Coaching model. While included in monthly professional development sessions, adding site-based coaching to each of these two programs would have meant almost $100,000.00 in additional funds allocated to the Discovery Education Contract. In addition, because these schools enjoyed abundant parental financial support, district planners did not include them in the purchase of additional STEAM curriculum materials.

For the 2018-2019 school year, the state board of education increased Title IV Part A funding to over one million dollars. This increase in funding allowed district staff to include School A and School E as fully funded members of the STEAM cohort. District staff, including the Federal Programs Specialist, the Director of Elementary Education, and me, a Program Specialist for Professional Development at the time, added Magnet Lead Teachers back into the budget. Additionally, we budgeted a hefty

$253,600.00 for the purchase of curriculum materials and supplies. The superintendent approved the grant proposal and the budget including the magnet lead teachers. The grant proposal received state approval in September of 2018.

In July 2018, district leadership changed. The Director of Elementary Education, the initial grant manager for Title IV Part A, became the new Coordinator of Magnet Programs, a new position in the district. This change meant that the grant manager for Title IV Part A would change, as would the goals of the grant. When the state approval of the original budget came, district leaders no longer supported the creation of Magnet Lead Teacher positions, and projects outside the original STEAM schools would be included in an amendment to the original budget.

In March 2019, the Coordinator of Magnet Programs resigned, and I moved into that role, assuming responsibility for the STEAM portion of the budget and the writing of the 2019-2020 budget. The state, again, allocated more than one million dollars for the 2019-2020 school year. However, district leaders in the Curriculum and Instruction Department and the Executive Director of Human Resources denied requests for the inclusion of the Magnet Lead Teacher Position (Appendix B shows district Title IV Part A budgets from 2017-2020).

At the same time, the Deputy Superintendent tasked School G, in the southeastern most corner of the school district with transitioning to an IB MYP school, a three-year application process requiring a complete transformation of school philosophy and practice. School G fed to a high school that offered the IB DP, but its enrollment lagged far behind the other IB DP in the district. The other, older DP program benefitted from an established feeder pattern of students from School A and another magnet elementary in

the district to School E's MYP. The schools' locations allowed the high school's IB students to market their programs and created a presence at all three feeder schools.

The high school IB program, which served the students at School G, had none of these advantages. It was located on the extreme southeastern portion of the district, making it too far a drive for parents to transport their children from the more affluent areas. Students in this area of the district represented a population with a higher percentage of rural and lower income than found in the central core of the district. School G families applied to other district middle schools in large numbers in order to avoid perceived discipline problems and poor achievement. For these reasons, district leaders decided to create a feeder school for the high school at its local middle school. The district leaders' goal for School G was to attract families back to their zoned school, raise achievement, and build the IB program at the high school receiving students from School G.

The school had already allocated a position to manage an advanced program within their staffing plan, but the district provided no additional funds for the 2017-2018 school year for the school to embark on the process to becoming an authorized IB MYP. The application fee of $4,000 alone could not be funded out of the school's general fund budget. In a meeting with the entire leadership staff of the school, including the principal, assistant principals, and academic coaches, I introduced the three-year application process and explained what would need to occur over that time-line to create a successful program. It became clear to me that the school could not begin the work required with their current level of funding. Table 10 shows costs for the IB MYP.

Table 11.

*Costs Associated with IB Program**

	2018-2019 Year 1	2019-2020 Year 2	2020-2021 Year 3
IB Fees	$4,000.00	$9,500.00	$9,500.00
IB Required PD Consultant	$0	$6,000.00	$0
Estimated Professional Development	$10,000.00	$10,000.00	$10,000.00

*International Baccalaureate Organization Fees and Services

In addition, the cost of the fees and services from the IB program at School G lacked several key positions required by all IB MYP schools in order to authorize a new program. All MYP students were required to take arts in all three years of the program and had to take both visual and performing arts. School G offered no visual arts classes and only limited performing arts options. Another requirement, all students had to take a second language which required the addition of a Spanish teacher. Table 12 illustrates the staffing needs of School G).

Table 12.

School G Additional Staffing Requirements

	2018-2019 Year 1	2019-2020 Year 2	2020-2021 Year 3
IB Coordinator	1	1	1
Spanish Instructor	0	1	2
Visual Arts Instructor	0	1	1
Performing Arts Instructor	1	2	2

District leaders promised an additional $20,000.00 in funding for the following school year to support the application process from the state FTE funds generated by

School G, and another high school offering the IB Diploma, for students passing the assessments and receiving the IB Diploma. At the same time district leaders moved the entire administrative staff of School G to district level positions, placing a second-year principal to lead the transformation along with two first-year assistant principals, none of whom had any experiences with the International Baccalaureate Organization.

With less than $400,000.00 provided by the 2017-2018 Title IV Part A grant allotment to fund the implementation, I worked with the Director of Elementary Education to prioritize elements of the funding plan. Given the limited funding, district leaders chose to focus on professional development as the most critical element to fund. Instead of providing full school training for all faculty members, each school's principal selected a cadre of four teachers to act as STEAM leaders to receive training and provide professional development on their campuses. As a program specialist in the Professional Development Department at that time, I was tasked with working with the schools and Discovery Education to implement the development of STEAM programs.

The district signed a five-year contract with Discovery Education to provide professional development for the STEAM schools, effectively committing Title IV funds to the emerging STEAM magnet programs for the next five years. Outcomes of the plan included increased preparation of students for STEAM careers and a long-term reduction in minority isolation. This plan directly addressed wide-spread poverty and inequity in the district with the goal of lifting students out of poverty and increasing post-secondary participation in education or employment.

Competencies. Prior to the pursuit of the MSAP grant in 2017, the school district did not participate in the national organization MSA. Unlike districts with a long presence in the organization, the district in this study did not have long-standing institutional knowledge about magnet programs, their goals, and implementation as understood by the MSA. While magnet programs existed at each high school and several of the middle and elementary schools, some of these programs were operating in name only. When the IBO conducted the five-year evaluations of three of the district IB programs, multiple areas for concern were identified, requiring program modifications. However, no real mechanism existed at the district level to monitor progress, hold school leaders accountable, and support the schools.

When the superintendent began her tenure, a program specialist was hired to work with the special programs, including magnet programs. As part of the duties, the program specialist organized the application process for the MSAP grant, a massive task consisting of working with district leaders from multiple departments to identify potential schools, selecting program themes, developing logic models, making budget considerations, and recommending policy changes. The grant writing team requested $15,000,000 over five years for six schools.

Despite the concentrated work to improve magnet programs and to create the new programs in this study, the superintendent's knowledge of the role of magnet programs within the district, as well as what defined a magnet program, was limited. It was clear from her responses, that she felt uncomfortable discussing magnet programs as different from their traditional neighborhood school counterparts. Her focus for magnet schools, as with all schools, was on student achievement (personal communication, July 30, 2019).

The Deputy Superintendent, referring to the role of magnet programs in the district, stated that the primary reason for a magnet program should be to increase student enrollment. He cited the need for magnet programs to create a culture in which students would want to participate (personal communication, March 27, 2019). The Director of Student Assignments, School Choice, and Magnet Programs echoed the Deputy's position about meeting individual student needs, when he discussed the importance of creating programs which met the needs of students' diverse interests. He said that the ultimate goal was to see all district schools performing at a high level academically, so that parents would not feel they had to leave their neighborhood school to attend a good school. Instead, the magnet themes should serve only as attractors, creating an environment where students with passions for the arts or STEAM were able to match their interests to their programs (personal communication, August 15, 2019).

The Deputy Superintendent stated that magnet programs could be called successful when they fulfilled the role for which they were intended in the district (personal communication, March 27, 2019). This statement showed an understanding of the importance for clear vision and concise goals for new programs. He discussed the importance of utilizing magnet programs to bring a diverse group of students together. He said success was to, "get kids from outside the inner city that are driving to you [the magnet school] for the IB program to be a part of the IB culture [that will then] go to an IB program" (personal communication, March 27, 2019).

Referring to whether district administrators considered the magnet theme when placing principals and assistant principals, the Deputy stated that the magnet theme had not been considered previously, but that going forward, "We have to consider an IB

expert to be an IB principal" (personal communication, March 30, 2019). The Director of Student Assignments, School Choice, and Magnet Programs said that he was not a part of the team selecting school leaders; however, he observed that the magnet theme had probably not been a consideration in past selections, but, he said, that was changing (personal communication, August 15, 2019). The School Board appointed a new principal at one of the high school's offering the IB DP who had years of experience as an IB Coordinator and Assistant Principal for the other DP in the district.

While district leaders may not have considered the magnet theme in placing administrators in the past, that did not mean they were unaware of the needs inherent in a magnet program. The Deputy Superintendent acknowledged that magnet schools needed, "Tons of support. Fiscal supports. You have to give them extra. They need more. You have to give them some freedoms too. You have to give them extra units. You have to give them extra PD [professional development]" (personal communication, March 27, 2019). The Director of Student Assignments, School Choice, and Magnet Programs also emphasized the need for funding to support magnet specific professional development. He said that for magnet schools to be able to meet the goal of increasing enrollment and attracting a more diverse population, they would need to be able to offer transportation for out of area students (personal communication, March 27, 2019).

The Director of Student Assignments, School Choice, and Magnet Programs indicated the lack of transportation offered to magnet students to be a significant barrier to their success despite the fact that neither the Deputy Superintendent, nor the Superintendent saw any challenges at the district level for magnet support. The Director of Student Assignments, School Choice, and Magnet Programs stated that by not

providing transportation, the district created magnet programs primarily for students of means or students whose parents had the ability to transport across the district in the morning and the afternoon every day (personal communication, August 15, 2019).

While the Deputy did not mention the lack of magnet lead teachers as a barrier to the success of magnet programs, he described the position when discussing the role of magnet programs in the district. He stated, “They should be the equal of the principal and the AP, part of that team. They should be the one that understands the pedagogy behind whatever magnet they have. They should be the person that is actively encouraging parents to come, and they should be the one changing the culture of the school” (personal communication, March 27, 2019). He placed importance on this position even though only two of the seven magnet programs in this study received staffing for this position.

Interpretation

The data did not show that any of the seven magnet programs in this study had clearly met measures of success. While there were positive indications of growth in areas, both achievement data and student enrollment data showed the need for improvement in closing the achievement gap in reading, math, and science, and in increasing enrollment.

The analysis of the budgets and staffing plans affecting these programs during the first two years of implementation showed shifting priorities among district leaders. It was apparent that a plan for implementation without the significant funding requested in the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant application was not created. When funding fell through, the district leaders struggled to put supports in place, and consequently made little progress in achieving their goals.

Judgments

The primary question I sought to answer through this study was "How can we support magnet programs in a non MSAP supported district?" The precarious and changing nature of funding for the magnet programs as well as multiple changes in school and district leaders meant that the schools and principals were in a constant state of adaptation to the new way of work. Despite the nearly constant state of change, the new programs saw some gains in academic achievement. However, given the investment in resources, it was not clear whether the district had received a favorable return on investment.

In order to identify the best practices that support successful magnet implementation, it was important to identify what makes a successful magnet program. The answer to what makes a successful magnet program varies in each school district. While magnet programs were clearly defined by the MSA, it was clear that magnet programs were utilized for more than just creating a diverse learning environment. Magnet schools were utilized in the district under study to draw students to schools with lower enrollment than desirable.

My next research question was: What are the critical supports districts can provide to support the development of magnet programs? As the study progressed, I realized that understanding the purpose of the magnet program and specific magnet theme was critical to the types of support provided. For example, if a planning team chooses to develop a magnet program at a school to address low student achievement, an academically focused magnet theme should be considered. The school will likely need additional support in the form of supplemental curriculum and professional development

to address achievement gaps.

Recommendations

When making recommendations for new magnet programs, I must lean heavily on the knowledge I gained by studying over 30 applications for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program grant. Several practices stood out as common across all applications, including the establishment of leadership and accountability teams, clear goals for academic achievement and curriculum development, and the addition of support personnel to manage the many new tasks inherent in the creation of magnet programs.

I recommend districts create a leadership team who will meet regularly to discuss the goals of the new programs. This team should include upper level district leaders, representatives from the office managing magnet programs, curriculum and instruction leaders, and budget administrators. When creating new magnet programs, funding and staffing must be considered critical to the success of the program. Of the schools receiving the MSAP grant during the 2017 grant cycle, the most common element was the need for sufficient district oversight and on-site, school-based support. These districts realized that to create four or five new programs required the full attention of at least one district level administrator and at least one, and often more than one, position at each school to provide daily support. In my professional opinion, as a district administrator for school choice and magnet programs, the development of new programs requires a full-time commitment, where the support of new programs is their sole responsibility, in order to be done well.

Additionally, funding for new magnet programs must be secured prior to year one of implementation. A clear five-year plan of funding goals and spending priorities should

be established prior to the start date. If funding availability changes, the leadership team should meet to re-establish the feasibility of the project which may include modifications to goals or methodology of implementation. If a district is unable to provide concentrated full-time support to new programs, it should consider delaying the implementation of new programs until resources are available to provide adequate support.

Conclusion

When the district under study did not receive the initial funding to support its plans for magnet programs, the failure to convene a planning team to review the feasibility of the plan and to set new goals, created a situation in which the schools experienced a lack of support sufficient to the task of developing seven new programs. While the schools in this study did not appear to be harmed by the addition of the new magnet programs, neither did they appear to have benefitted greatly. When considering the financial investment to date exceeds $1,000,000.00, this lack of progress becomes alarming.

In Chapter Five, I will address actions the district could take to address the challenges discussed above. Long term planning, which considers the context, conditions, culture, and competencies affecting the new initiative, is critical to the success of new magnet programs. However, it is just as important to maintain awareness of how these factors are changing and plans are revised to address new considerations.

CHAPTER FIVE

To-Be Framework

In this section, I will present a vision for what the ideal implementation of magnet programs could look like in the district studied. This vision of the future includes nothing less than the unification of demographic groups into one community by helping children learn from those different from themselves from kindergarten to graduation. While increased student achievement is a goal, the true desired outcome of this plan is an improved society where adults are able to work with others unlike themselves and choose to live among people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.

Context

Support from district level leaders is critical to the development and efficacy of new magnet programs. The Magnet School Assistance Program Technical Assistance Center created a guide for creating logic models to guide district leaders through the planning process for the MSAP grant application. They defined logic models as depicting, "the current situation of the school district and schools, the resources available, the activities to be conducted, the outputs to be produced, and the outcomes to be realized (Ford, Walton, Balow, & Lapointe, n.d., p. 5). Ford et al. provided sample models encouraging districts to consider the context and plan for short term, mid-term, and long-term outcomes. They cited the need to connect the logic model for individual programs within the larger mission of the district.

At the time of this study, the citizens of the district at study lived in several small, somewhat segregated communities. This segregation within the community in both racial demographics and socio-economic status resulted in schools where demographic groups

were clustered homogenously. While existing magnet schools resolved the district's segregation to the satisfaction of the federal courts, at that time, the district provided transportation to the magnet schools. If the new magnet programs are to succeed, the district must return to providing transportation for students to attend these programs which may be many miles outside their school zones.

The school district in this study is roughly the size of the state of Rhode Island. The distance between schools and the location of several of the schools far from the business community where parents are likely to work, means that if parents select one of the magnet programs, they have to drive their students many miles daily to and from the chosen school. If the district employs three magnet bus hubs located at strategic locations across the district, students from a broader range of economic backgrounds will be able to attend.

Parents will be able to drop off students at hub locations, close to central arteries and businesses. At the hub sites, students will board buses which will transport students to their magnet programs. Additionally, the expansion of before and after school programs at magnet school sites will mitigate the challenge for parents as they negotiate commuting time across the district. By removing the barrier of transportation, the district leaders will not only afford marginalized groups the opportunity to participate in high quality, innovative instruction, they will change the nature of the community. They could begin to heal the community from the long-felt effects of forced segregation and create a society where they see diversity as a strength rather than a challenge to overcome.

This solution to one critical challenge facing magnet programs is only the first step in a fundamental shift in the way of work the school district leaders will take to

increase the impact and efficacy of its magnet programs. The school district has operated under an annual strategic plan. However, in my capacity as a district level support for school choice and magnet programs, I have found that a district vision for up to five years, will be beneficial to our work.

In an ideal situation, the strategic plan will include input from all departments, schools, parents, students, and community members as well as historical context for the decisions made leading to the current context. Changes in district leadership over the three years prior to my study meant that none of the district leadership at the time of my study were in district decision making positions during the district's court ordered desegregation plan, and they may not have had a clear understanding of the role of magnet schools within the district or understood the potential impact of these programs and consequences of their removal.

In my plan for the future, participants in the writing of the strategic plan will work across departments to identify the district's overall goals. It may be a helpful exercise for district leaders to complete an As Is-To Be chart (Wagner et al., 2006) in order to capture the assets, tangible and intangible, the district brings to the challenge as well as limitations. Each department will have a five-year roadmap based on the strategic plan. The School Choice Office will establish goals for each magnet program as part of the execution of the district plan.

The involvement of all departments in the creation of this strategic plan, will increase understanding across the district around goals and actions to take place over the course of the plan. To increase this understanding, a communication plan will be employed to inform all stakeholders about their critical role in the direction of the district

over the course of the next five years. Rather than stakeholders seeing potential changes as something done to them, the message will be framed through the lens of how each person is critical to success of the plan.

Conditions

The use of a logic model to guide decisions regarding the development of new programs will help to identify potential barriers such as those identified in Section Four. The Code of Federal Regulations, from the U. S. Department of Education, provides guidance for all federal programs. It defines a logic model as "a rationale for the proposed process, product, strategy, or practice that includes a logic model" (2017, part 77). While a logic model was utilized in the planning for the application for the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant application, the logic model was not revised when the expected conditions changed. The logic model will be revisited as conditions change to address new needs and challenges which may arise over the course of the first three critical years of program development.

Additions to the logic model and a quarterly review of the outcomes will ensure program success. The logic model presented in the Department of Education's guidelines for applying to the MSAP is a linear based model (Ford et al., 2020). The challenge with this model is that real world problems seldom come with linear solutions. As the accountability movement has increased the stakes for academic achievement, school leaders have seen that improving the quality of education for all students requires a multi-faceted approach which considers a broad range factors influencing the outcome.

The new logic model utilized for program development will look much like the 4 C's in an As Is-To Be model (Wagner et al., 2006) like that found in Appendices A and D

of this study. The key strength in changing the way the plan is developed is that it will require a fuller understanding of the historical context in which the school operates as well as the challenges and unique assets each school possesses as it begins the transformation process. For each of the arenas of change described by Wagner et al., the planning committee will consider the perspective of multiple stakeholders. This process will be made easier by the inclusion of a broad base of expertise on the team.

Both the operational and the curriculum sides of the district in conjunction with community groups, parents, and teacher representatives will provide input into the context, conditions, competencies, and culture which define the school prior to the change. The group will then plan what they expect to see three years after the implementation of the new program. The path from what is to the vision of the desired plan will define the implementation of the program. The magnet planning team will create a plan for each of the elements of change which will include stages based on Kotter and Cohen's change model (2002).

The Federal Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) in conjunction with the Magnet Schools of America (MSA) refer to a Theory of Change and a Theory of Action. The As Is-To Be visioning strategy (Wagner et al., 2006) lends itself to the change theory, while Kotter and Cohen's eight stages of change (2002) will flesh out the theory of action. When a logic model, focused on planning for the change, fails to identify the effect of the context and conditions in which the change will occur, the program will suffer. As the team drafts the change and action plan, they will include several key considerations. Required considerations to add to the logic models include:

1. Identification of district support hierarchy
2. Explicit goals
3. Funding source
4. Guidelines for hiring

Identification of the department or district leaders assigned to shepherd the new magnet programs through its early stages is critical to the success of the new venture. This identification will include the chain of command to whom the school may report regarding all elements of the program development. The leaders in this department or the person in this position will also be responsible for quarterly evaluations of the progress toward the implementation plan. This clear delineation of duties will prevent multiple departments from providing conflicting information and will aid in communicating how the new magnet program is a crucial part of the district vision.

The planning team will identify explicit goals regarding the improvement of student scores on state achievement tests for all demographic subgroups. The historical purpose of magnet schools was to alleviate racial isolation and bring about social justice. Therefore, it is fitting that a key component of the plan will be to require increased achievement data for each subgroup in each category and a reduction in achievement gaps across race, economic status, and gender.

Each school will be assigned enrollment goals for each year of implementation. Enrollment goals will be based on the Inventory of School Houses (ISH) report. As the primary goal of a magnet program is to decrease minority isolation, in order to be considered a candidate for a potential magnet school, the school leaders must show a need for a targeted recruitment effort. This recruitment effort, when successful, will

increase enrollment at the target school. This means that the school must be significantly below capacity for enrollment. If a school is only able to take a handful of students each year, they are likely not going to be able to recruit enough students from beyond the school's attendance zone to change the demographic nature of the school and reduce minority isolation.

A clear funding source must be considered when writing the implementation plan. The development of the programs in this study was predicated on the receipt of the MSAP grant. When that funding source fell through and the district had promised the programs to the community, the path forward was uncertain. For future programs, back-up funding sources must be considered, or the district must secure the funding source prior to commitment to the delivery of the program. Funding sources will be adequate to include a magnet lead teacher at each magnet school as well as a supplemental support liaison at the district level.

Competencies

These improvements to the planning process are more likely to occur when all stakeholders participate in continuing education regarding the magnet programs offered. District leaders from the Superintendent down will understand the role that magnet schools play in the execution of the strategic plan as well as the historical significance of the programs. District leaders across multiple departments will understand the basic outlines for program themes selected at new and existing magnet programs. This knowledge may reduce program duplication at magnet schools such as a district-wide character development program in a magnet school with a strong character development component. This understanding will reduce initiative fatigue as multiple departments will

not compete to convey their programs and requirements to the school staff. Rather, departments will coordinate to couch initiatives in the format and language of the magnet theme. Teachers in a program experiencing this kind of coordination will be bound to feel a high level of support as they learn and deliver the program to students.

In addition to district level support, each school site must have a magnet coordinator to organize the implementation of the program on the school level. The coordinator will be responsible for training and coaching teachers in the magnet theme and assisting in developing magnet themed units of study. The coordinator will document the units and participate in the quarterly review. Magnet coordinators will also be heavily involved in marketing and recruitment efforts as well as communicating the message about the changes to the school culture and curriculum to the community.

Magnet school leaders will be aware of the five pillars of Magnet Schools as described by the Magnet Schools of America (MSA) (2020d). Principals considered for leadership of existing magnet programs will have a strong focus on celebrating diversity and a demonstrated commitment to academic innovation. Ideally, they will have experience in leading a significant change, be highly revered by parent groups at previous assignments, and show a personal commitment to the magnet theme selected for their school.

The magnet school administrators will include the goals of the magnet program implementation in the School Improvement Plans (SIP). The ideal leaders will recognize that the magnet program is a vehicle to drive academic achievement and innovative instruction on the campus. The magnet program cannot be seen as something to

implement once test scores have improved. Rather, it should be seen as the way that test scores will improve.

Culture

The school culture at the new magnet schools will be characterized by collaboration toward common goals. In my professional experience, I have witnessed what a truly collaborative magnet school implementation can look like. In these schools, all stakeholders are intimately aware of the changes to curriculum and the instructional model occurring and share in the work of the mission and vision. It is powerful when parents are aware of upcoming units of instruction and are able to lend personal experiences as learning opportunities to students. This collaboration between teachers and parents will not happen in a school culture where parental input is not valued or where curriculum is not shared and communicated.

Once an environment of like-minded, passionate professionals has been created, it is critical that it be protected. New hires must be carefully selected. Successful administration teams will describe the culture of the school and carefully assess new applicants to achieve a fit for their school. All staff will understand that magnet programs are and should be different from their neighborhood school peers and must be dedicated to the extra labor involved in maintaining the vision.

Conclusion

With an understanding of the historical contexts, the conditions within a school, development of competent leaders, and the creation of a positive culture, magnet programs will transform an entire school. In order for this to occur, a broad coalition of the willing must come together to create a plan to address the school's present realities

before initiating the change. Through the representation of multiple viewpoints, a vision that fully capitalizes on the school's assets and plans to address needs will create a successful school.

CHAPTER SIX

Strategies and Actions

In this section, I will utilize proven leadership strategies for guiding organizational change to plan actions the district at the center of this study can take to transition from what is to what could be. Through the careful crafting of a comprehensive vision that would govern both magnet programs in general and the implementation of specific programs at individual schools, the district leaders may be able to better support their implementation. Schools would benefit by the cohesive approach to support through common expectations across multiple departments.

Leading Change

In order to move from the current reality to a vision of the future in which appropriate program support is in place, the district under study must embrace practices which successfully guide institutions through significant change. Heifetz and Linsky (2004), Wagner et al. (2006), and Kotter and Cohen (2012) wrote about the need for communication of a clear vision and the inclusion of all stakeholders in the proposed change. The change leader should have well-established goals to create a road map through change.

Heifetz and Linsky described a change in which stakeholders address leadership dilemmas which may challenge people to confront established ways of work and understand adaptive change. Heifetz and Linsky said, “Leadership often entails finding ways to enable people to face up to frustrating realities” (2004, p. 33). The district in this study was in the midst of an adaptive change at the time of my study. Seven new magnet schools were in the midst of development, and the largest impediment to their effective

implementation was lack of a clear understanding for the degree to which change must be implemented.

Wagner et al. (2006) established the 4 Cs of change leadership to aid in helping change leaders establish a holistic view of the all elements surrounding the potential change. Kotter and Cohen (2002) stated that every successful wide-scale change is guided by a clear vision. When leaders address all four arenas around the problem statement as seen in the As Is-To Be chart addressed in chapter five of this study, they are able to address the transformation holistically and anticipate problems which may arise during implementation. Creating a sense of urgency, developing deep understanding of the problem, and a vision for the future are the first steps toward change.

Critically, full implementation of magnet programs must include efforts from multiple administrators in multiple departments, working in concert with the school leadership team, teachers, parents, students, and larger community. In my professional experience, I observed a single department of district leaders set out to start an initiative without consideration for how the initiative may affect existing goals and projects under the direction of leaders in other departments. Heifetz and Linsky (2004) made a salient point about this, stating, “We stay within our area of expertise and opt to affirm our primary loyalties. Doing otherwise would be personally difficult and professionally dangerous” (p. 33). I observed that people in positions of power are cautious about stepping out of comfort zones, and this discomfort is the enemy of real change.

Assessing Effectiveness

As change leaders take action on their vision, they must create a process through which to assess the effectiveness of their plan and ensure that new magnet programs

created through their work result in quality academic programs with equitable access for all students. Patton (2008) outlined an evaluation process by which leaders of change may participate in the evaluation, employing his adaptive cycle included below in figure 1.

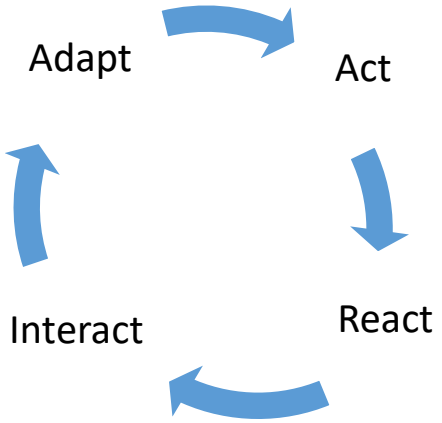

Figure 1. Patton's Adaptive Cycle (Patton, 2008, p. 209)

Once the Magnet Advisory team has established the vision, they must continue to revisit the vision as each stage of the plan is implemented. Patton stated, "Only when organizations and people take in information from the environment and react to changing conditions can they act on that same environment to reduce uncertainty and increase discretionary flexibility" (Patton, 2008, p. 207). By systematically assessing whether results of actions align with expected outcomes, the change leaders can react to changes and adapt plans when outcomes are unsatisfactory or when they exceed expectations.

Patton's evaluation model not only includes but is also partly directed by the intended users in addition to possible evaluators or consultants. Utilization focused evaluation is an inclusive process seeking input from all constituencies involved in the process to be evaluated (Patton, 2008, p. 207). Employing this model, classroom teachers

as well as administrators in the School Choice or Magnet Office will have input in the evaluation of the implementation.

This partnership among all stakeholders is directly counter to evaluation practices of the last ten years. Race to the Top, an initiative instituted by the U. S. Department of Education under President Obama, provided competitive grants for states that employed education reforms including increased accountability for teachers based on students' scores on standards-based assessments. Race to the Top intended to provide . . .

> . . . funding to consortia of States to develop assessments that are valid, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information about what students know and can do, and measure student achievement against standards designed to ensure that all students gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace. (U. S. Department of Education, 2020)

The result of the measures states employed across the country included increased significance of testing and the connection of teacher evaluations to student achievement scores.

Thomas and Wieczorek (2019) studied the lessons learned from Race to the Top accountability practices. They found that, "If principals and teachers do not believe the system can improve teaching at the classroom, school, or district levels, then they will simply ignore the policy, or treat the system as a compulsory obligation" (Thomas & Wieczorek, 2019, p. 28). Change leaders must work within the existing culture; therefore, they must create an evaluation system in which teachers will receive feedback as growth focused with clear connections to improvement in student achievement and overall school culture.

Strategies and Action

Across the nation, school districts are turning to magnet programs to create diverse learning environments and as a means of school improvement. The creation of these theme-based programs requires a significant investment in time, leadership, and funding. At the time of my study, the district under study lacked clear procedures for the creation of magnet programs. I have framed my recommendations for change using Kotter and Cohen's strategies outlined in *Heart of Change* (2002).

Kotter and Cohen (2002) stated, "Without enough urgency, large-scale change can become an exercise in pushing a gigantic boulder up a very tall mountain" (p. 15). Creating a sense of urgency is the critical first step in implementing large-scale organizational change. In order to create a sense of urgency in the district, I recommend the superintendent gather stakeholders in the School Choice Office, Area Directors, Secondary Education, Elementary Education, and Finance departments to discuss the effects of district policies on magnet programs.

Stakeholders will participate in professional development from the National Institute for Magnet School Leadership (NIMSL) to establish goals relating to the five pillars of magnet programs: diversity, innovative curriculum and professional development, academic excellence, high quality instructional systems, and family and community partnerships (Magnet Schools of America, 2020d). Chief among these goals is to increase minority participation, especially in high school programs with advanced curriculum, and to provide equitable access to high quality programs across the school district.

NIMSL, a division of the Magnet Schools of America (MSA), provides direct support for schools and districts to assure that magnet programs meet all of the five pillars of magnet programs and are not magnets, "in name only" (Magnet Schools of America, 2020c). NIMSL created a magnet certification process, involving a deep dive into each of the five pillars of magnet programs. NIMSL described the certification process as providing, "parents, students and community partners confidence that each nationally certified magnet school, no matter its location, is held to the same high standard in every school district" (Magnet Schools of America, 2020c, para 1). Evaluations from impartial outside organizations can help stakeholders see long-established practices from new perspectives. Because NIMSL is a national organization, they have worked with districts of all sizes and across a variety of demographics. The NIMSL certification process may help district and school leaders understand fully the need to seek change to ensure the seven magnet programs each meet not only the high standards of MSA, but also keep their promise to each student who enrolls in a magnet school to ensure a high quality education that meets the five pillars of magnet programs.

At this time, district leaders will review the school staffing plans and budgets, student achievement, student enrollment, and the requirements of each of the selected magnet themes to identify inconsistencies. For instance, at International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme (MYP) schools, district and school leaders will determine if the staffing plan allows the school to offer the required eight courses every year for all students. District and school leaders will create a budget, which will provide the support to pay relevant IB dues and fees and provide ongoing training for the coordinator and teaching staff to address changes in the program. District leaders will plan for addressing

possible pitfalls, such as unexpected required expenditures not covered in the school budget.

District leaders will also discuss additional initiatives in place throughout the district, which may conflict with the magnet program theme or create challenges as school leaders juggle priorities in attempt to implement school improvement initiatives from multiple departments. School administrators and teachers can struggle with initiative fatigue when attempting to implement multiple programs within the same time period. Ron Canuel (2017) described initiative fatigue as,

> The long-term negative physical and emotional effects that educators feel due to constant changes to classroom activities and expected outcomes. Such changes have been occurring over the past twenty years and have created a deepened sense of skepticism and hesitation among educators. (para. 17)

When multiple departments in a school seek to improve instruction and leadership through professional development plans and training cohorts, principals, faced with only limited hours for faculty development must choose how to implement these expectations that are sometimes contradictory. In a district characterized by extensive leadership changes at the principal level, principals may not have the security to decline participation in a new program for fear they may be the next leader to be moved from their school.

As stakeholders learn more about the magnet certification process and what defines magnet programs, they will establish goals relating to the five pillars of magnet programs. These pillars make up the principles magnet schools strive to develop including diversity, innovative curriculum and professional development, academic

excellence, high quality instructional systems, and family and community partnerships. Chief among these goals will be to increase minority participation, especially in high school programs with advanced curriculum, and provide equitable access to high quality programs across the school district.

A critical area that NIMSL consultants will examine is the lack of transportation offered to students attending magnet programs out of their zoned areas. While the district in this study opened new programs in the northern and southern ends of the district to be more accessible to families living outside the district's central core, these programs remain too remote for families outside their zones to provide before and after school transportation. To reach students beyond their zones, the district must provide some form of transportation.

Another area the NIMSL consultant will seek to review is whether funding of each magnet program is sufficient for its implementation. A review of all revenue sources supporting magnet as well as other school choice options, such as Career and Technical Education Programs, may identify uneven support at different schools. While the Deputy Superintendent has led the redistribution of funding to better support some of the magnet programs, the district may benefit from challenging existing funding structures to plan for how existing revenue can be repurposed or better utilized to support all program funding.

Orfield and Frankenberg (2011) in their report to the School Board of Jefferson County, titled, Diversity and Educational Gains: A Plan for a Changing County and its Schools, made similar recommendations to Jefferson County about their magnet programs. Orfield and Frankenberg acknowledged the crucial part transportation provides in the success of magnet programs. They recommended that, "transportation should be

provided to all magnet/option/traditional schools to ensure that all students in all parts of the districts have fair and equitable access to these schools" (p. 21). Further, they cautioned against the inclusion of multiple magnet themes within the same school and that all magnet programs be converted to true 100% magnet schools with no established zones (2011).

The second stage within Kotter and Cohen's framework is to build the guiding team (2002). The Superintendent will create a Magnet Advisory Team, consisting of directors or coordinators from district departments including Student Assignments and School Choice, Curriculum and Instruction, Career and Technical Education and Teaching and Learning to conduct biannual reviews at each program. The participation from leaders in multiple departments will ensure a clear understanding of the needs of the school as a whole are understood globally by the district leaders and taken into consideration as they consider improvement initiatives which could affect the school's program.

The Magnet Advisory Team will seek participation in the creation of a magnet review rubric by inviting school administrators, magnet lead teachers, academic coaches, and teachers to participate in surveys and a discussion forum to determine program needs. The Magnet Advisory Team will conduct surveys of teachers and administrators online, through an anonymous link, to reduce the fear of reprisal and to elicit honest responses. They will host an open forum for school faculty and school leaders, along with parents, to discuss survey results and existing conditions and to brainstorm priorities for improvement.

The school choice team, district elementary and secondary education teams, interested school administrators, and magnet lead teachers will gather to create a guiding coalition charged with creating a magnet school vision, goals, and implementation rubric that reflects local goals and acknowledges local context, conditions, culture, and competencies. This rubric will include sections for whole school review, school leadership, and classroom instruction. The Magnet Advisory Team will utilize this rubric with an emphasis on strength development. Members of the biannual review team will seek to build on what is working and help the school leaders to identify one area on which to focus and improve by the next review. In this way, all stakeholders will see this process as a positive support rather than a high stakes evaluation.

The third stage of the organizational change is forming a strategic vision and initiative. The Magnet Advisory Team will utilize the As Is-To Be (Wagner et al., 2006) exercise, and the school choice guiding coalition will work together to provide clear vision to district and school site leaders. The vision statement will include goals for each magnet program around each of the five pillars.

The Magnet Advisory Team will create a diversity plan for each individual school based on the review of student enrollment trends for the previous three years. The team will consider the desirability of the program based on past numbers of applications over the same time period as well as current trends for enrollment in surrounding schools. Enrollment goals will be set at achievable levels at no more than a 2.5% increase or decrease of subgroup enrollment closer to the district average for a given year.

The vision for innovative curriculum and professional development will include a desired number of hours of magnet themed lessons a student will experience over the

course of the school year. Schools implementing magnet themes which do not supply their own assessment measures, such as are supplied for IB and Cambridge programs, will create their own magnet standards with which to measure whether a student has mastered instruction. This part of the vision will include the professional development plan for teacher, which spans from the introduction of magnet theme-based lessons to the evaluation of student assessment products against magnet and state standards.

The Magnet Advisory team will set goals for the schools' academic performance based on achievement on state standards-based assessments for each demographic sub-group in addition to the schools' overall achievement. Schools with a history of a high level of academic achievement school-wide may miss areas for growth when not analyzing data for subgroups. While academic success on standards assessments is important, it will not give a complete picture of the academic performance of the magnet school. The vision, in addition to state achievement test scores, will guide the district and school leaders to set goals specific to each school's magnet theme. A STEAM school, for example, may have goals for science fair participation. A school for the creative and performing arts may have an expectation for a percentage of student participation in performances or other means of sharing creations with an audience. Through these measures, the school leaders and the Magnet Advisory Team can assess student achievement holistically, rather than relying solely on test scores.

The vision will include plans for high quality instructional systems. Members of the Magnet Advisory Team from the department of Teaching and Learning will work with school administrators to interpret the district instructional framework expectations through the lens of the school's magnet theme. The leaders of the district in this study

based their instructional framework on the work of Danielson's frameworks for teaching clusters in her book *Implementing the Framework for Teaching in Enhancing Professional Practice* (2009). Danielson identified in her framework six clusters of teaching behaviors linked to academic achievement through empirical study. These clusters included: successful learning, professional learning, clarity and accuracy, learning environment, classroom management, and intellectual engagement.

Each cluster is divided into four levels of teaching mastery from unsatisfactory to distinguished with indicators in each level of common behaviors teachers may display. The Teaching and Learning team and administrators will work with teachers to translate these indicators into magnet theme specific language in order to unify what may seem like two separate goals: meeting expectations for teaching on the evaluation tool and providing quality magnet theme instruction.

The last of the five pillars of magnet programs, family and community partnerships, will also be addressed in the vision. The vision will include goals for schools to engage parents and the community in meaningful ways to create real-world experiences for students around the magnet theme. Parent and community involvement in magnet development will strengthen the program to create a support system to extend beyond possible changes in staffing and leadership. District leaders will create a vision for magnet implementation for each school through common understanding of the needs of magnet programs, a common assessment of the existing condition, and collaboration toward common goals.

Kotter and Cohen's fifth step in leading change (2002) involves removing barriers. District leaders will overcome barriers of funding by reviewing revenue sources

such as federal grants and restructuring current allocation models. Additional barriers could include time for planning and professional development. Staffing plans for each magnet school will include a lead teacher position to guide school improvement in the direction of the five pillars of magnet programs and will increase the ability to focus on program fidelity and implementation support at the classroom level. The magnet lead teachers will serve as the expert on campus for the development of each school's magnet theme. They will be included as part of the school's leadership team and will serve as the voice of the magnet program as the school leaders discuss improvement plans, budgeting, and staffing concerns.

The magnet lead teacher will also serve as the marketing and recruitment specialist on the campus. The person in this position will be responsible for collaborating with the Student Assignment and School Choice Office on plans to meet established recruitment goals. The Student Assignment and School Choice Office will expand in order to reduce the ratio of schools to staff members. Additional staff members will include a teacher facilitator with knowledge of specific magnet themes to assist the magnet lead teachers in planning and delivering professional development, identifying budget needs, and developing school specific marketing and recruitment plans.

In Kotter and Cohen's sixth stage of organization change (2002), change leaders recognize short term wins. There are a number of ways to recognize progress toward achieving full implementation of magnet programs or magnet school certification. First, a monthly newsletter with magnet program updates will be created to celebrate innovative instruction and distributed electronically to each magnet school once a month. This will serve to recognize schools as they make improvements within each of the five pillars of

magnet programs. Another way to celebrate short-term wins is through the bi-annual review process. Because it is strength oriented and designed to create winnable goals, each visit should be a celebration of progress.

Annual participation in the Magnet School of America Merit Award program will provide affirming recognition from an outside organization that the school is making positive strides in their magnet program implementation. Through the merit award, MSA recognizes schools for their implementation of practices supporting the five pillars of magnet programs (Magnet Schools of America, 2020d). Like the bi-annual review by the Magnet Advisory Team, the writing of the merit award application will be a time for school leaders to reflect on practice as well as plan for improvement in areas where more attention is needed.

At this point in the change process, Kotter and Cohen urge change leaders to sustain acceleration (2002). Because the Magnet Advisory Team will meet regularly about clear and established goals for each program, school leaders will receive the same information from each Magnet Advisory Team member when seeking support. The Magnet Advisory Team's annual review of the implementation plan will serve as a time to adjust strategies and account for new conditions and changing contexts, competencies, and culture (Wagner et al., 2006).

Kotter and Cohen's final stage calls for the institution of the change (2002). While the involvement of a multi-departmental team to provide school leaders with support from curriculum to finance, will, itself, be a significant change, the real change will take the form of the creation of procedures to govern the future creation of new magnet programs or the closure of programs deemed ineffectual. Currently, no procedure exists

to govern the creation of new programs, and a lack of understanding for the work involved in creating magnet programs has resulted in proposals to create magnet programs to solve a wide variety of district challenges. The Student Assignment and School Choice Office administrators will assist the Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent, by identifying procedures with the help of the Magnet Advisory Team for the creation of new magnet programs, revision of magnet themes at existing programs, and the closing of magnet programs. Part of these new guidelines will include the prohibition of school level leaders creating new programs. New programs will require extensive review of current resources for approval along with consideration to the leadership qualities beneficial to the magnet theme proposed for the school site. Because these considerations span multiple departments and have far-reaching impact, school leaders will not have autonomy over the creation or removal of new programs.

District leaders will expand the accessibility of magnet programs to out of zone students. District leaders will establish transportation hubs for magnet students to receive transportation services. Magnet transportation hubs will allow parents to bring students to a few sites throughout the district where students will then board buses bound to their specific school sites. While the district's size and the distance between schools is a barrier to providing economical transportation, the creation of strategic hubs at which students may wait for designated magnet buses will reduce the cost of transporting students beyond their zoned school. Finally, the district will increase the number of extended day seats available, before and after school, at magnet schools to assist parents who may work on the opposite end of the school district or in a neighboring metropolitan area. This option will defray the cost of providing transportation as many parents are

leery of long bus rides, and extended day opportunities can be structured to self-fund as parents pay for students to attend before and after school care.

Community partners on the national and international levels such as Magnet Schools of America or the International Baccalaureate Organization will provide guidance on best practices for magnet programs in general and program specific theme development. While this support and involvement is critical, it is imperative that local stakeholders such as the chamber of commerce, parent organizations, and the teachers' union are involved. In my professional experience working in and with magnet programs for over a decade, I have seen that selection of a magnet theme must reflect the needs and culture of the community it will serve. If a community does not see the value in students gaining global perspectives, a program focused on international studies such as those offered by International Baccalaureate Organization and Cambridge International Education may not be successful. However, if the community has a rich appreciation of the arts, the selection of an arts theme may be appropriate. Parent organizations will help the school district's planning team understand what parents are looking for in new programs as well as how best to reach families for marketing and recruitment. Teachers' unions will help guide school leaders to create a plan for implementation which accounts for the additional work required by teachers but will not violate existing contracts. Appendix E provides a summary of the strategies and actions discussed.

Conclusion

Supporting magnet programs through careful investment of time and resources cannot occur without the clear understanding of the purpose of magnet programs and a clear governing vision embraced by all stakeholders. District leaders must commit to

removing unintended barriers set in place by competing initiatives and developing a deep understanding of the needs of each magnet program based on the goals created by the district leaders, as well as theme-specific needs. It is only through a concerted effort across all departments that the district will be able to support new magnet programs and ensure their long-term success.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Implications and Policy Recommendations

A Call to Leadership

At the time of this study, the changes in leadership as well as the hierarchical changes within the district under study heightened the need for clear, established procedures to create continuity of work. When an organization is well established with clear policy and procedures in place, it is much like a solid brick wall. When a single leader leaves a position, the effect should be similar to removing a single brick. The wall should not crumble. When clear policies and procedures are not in place, transition within critical leadership can lead to the loss of institutional knowledge and can lead to a change in the mission and level of support of a given program.

In the last two decades, there has been a national push toward the creation of school choice options for parents to provide alternatives to neighborhood schools perceived to be in a moribund state of decline based on critically, and repeatedly low standardized test scores. Diane Ravitch, an early supporter of a reform movement which touted school choice as a mechanism to increase competition and force school districts to improve low performing schools, pointed out the critical flaws in the movement in her book *Reign of Error* (2014). She wrote:

> The reformers say they care about poverty, but they do not address it other than to insist upon private management of the schools in urban districts; the reformers ignore racial segregation altogether, apparently accepting it as inevitable. Thus, they leave the root causes of low academic performance undisturbed. What began as a movement to “save minority children from failing

> schools" and narrow the achievement gap by privatizing their schools has not accomplished that goal, but the movement is undaunted. (p. 6)

This laissez-faire attitude toward accepting segregation as part of the inevitable context within which educators work, may be a contributing factor in the re-segregation of public schools across southern states. Siegel-Hawley and Frankenberg (2012) attempted to sound the alarm in their study of federally funded magnet programs. They wrote, "The nation's school enrollment is growing more racially and socioeconomically diverse and, at the same time, displaying deepening patterns of segregation" (p. 7). While the nation saw a return rise in racial isolation, the Department of Education removed desegregation goals as a research topic in its evaluation of federally funded magnet programs in 2003 (Siegel-Hawley &Frankenberg, 2012).

With this concerning trend in mind, and understanding the resources, both fiscal and in human capital, expended in the development of the new magnet programs in the district in this study, I sought to evaluate the implementation process with the goal of creating guidelines for the success of future magnet programs. Findings of my program evaluation pointed to a need to address stability of program funding, in order to assure appropriate district and school level supports are provided. The program evaluation pointed to the need for a broader coalition of district leaders to work together effectively to plan and implement existing and new magnet programs in the future.

Heifetz, Grashow, and Lansky (2009) identified the first step in leading an adaptive change is to get "on the balcony" (p. 49) to see the challenge from a broader perspective. In so doing, "You will grasp the nature of the adaptive challenges at hand" (Heifetz, et al., 2009, p. 49). My change plan requires district leaders to reframe

perspectives beyond their direct responsibility, to consider how their department can support what must be a multi-faceted approach to program development. Wagner et al. (2006) referred to this approach as developing multiple leadership identities. The team of district leaders, critical to the success of any new program, must approach the collaboration from the perspective of the unique needs of a school in transformation, providing instruction through the lens of a specific magnet theme, with a goal to reduce minority isolation and increase academic achievement for all students. This goal may require leaders to take positions and support actions which differ from those taken when their departmental needs may be the sole consideration (Wagner et al., 2006).

Ayscue, Levy, Siegel-Hawley, and Woodward (2017), working for The Civil Rights Project, created a manual for local stakeholders, *Choices Worth Making: Creating, Sustaining, and Expanding Diverse Magnet Schools*, based on research done prior to their study as well as their work with The Civil Rights Project. In the manual they discussed the importance of having leaders who are deeply collaborative to the success of the program.

Magnet Program Leadership

Citing a 1996 study based on a sampling of the National Educational Longitudinal Study, Ayscue et al. pointed to magnet programs as a successful tool to improve student learning and raise student achievement, specifically among economically challenged students or among minorities. They stated, “Magnet schools were more effective in raising student achievement in reading and social studies than regular public, Catholic, or secular private schools” (2017, p. 4). They also said, “Well-designed racially diverse learning environments have been linked to enhanced classroom discussion, more

advanced social and historical thinking, greater commitment to increasing racial understanding, improved racial and cultural awareness, and higher levels of student persistence" (p. 6). The key to their position, however, is the qualifying term, "well-designed." Crafting a definition for what can be considered a well-designed magnet program as well as the process to ensure that outcome, is at the center of my policy advocacy. Districts must create a team to provide 360-degree input at the planning stage as well as in creation of accountability measures. Most importantly, the team must be willing to seek alternatives to the creation of a new magnet program if the context, conditions, culture, and competencies, are not present to ensure that the new program meets the established definition.

Educational Analysis

The five pillars of Magnet Programs include diversity, innovative curriculum and professional development, academic excellence, high quality instructional systems, and family and community partnerships. It is not my position that a magnet school is necessarily better than a neighborhood school without a magnet theme. However, because magnet schools must attract new families to attend a school beyond their neighborhood zone, the magnet schools must provide support for learning, resulting in a high level of academic achievement as measured by state standards assessments along with innovative themed instruction not available at neighborhood sites.

Diversity. Orfield and Lee of the Harvard Civil Rights Project (2004), noted in their research on integration and magnet schools that students who attend racially integrated schools are more likely to live lives which are fully integrated in their work lives, their choice of residence, and their social spheres. Domina, Penner, and Penner (2017) in their study, "Categorical Inequality: Schools as Sorting Machines," in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, discussed the role schools play in either promoting inclusion and diversity or standing as gate keepers who prop up inequitable systems. They wrote:

> When school districts or others define school enrollment boundaries, implement school choice systems, or construct selective admissions systems, they determine which students are eligible to attend which schools. These decisions generate meaningful social groups, transforming youth into schoolmates and crosstown rivals. (p. 319)

Addressing minority isolation is not only about increasing academic achievement for the students currently attending our schools, rather it is part of a broader goal to create a more peaceful and unified community.

Innovative curriculum. In addition to the focus on creating richly diverse and inclusive learning environments, magnet schools are characterized by their focus on specific magnet themes. Magnet Schools of America's "A Snapshot of Magnet Schools in America" (2020a) identified STEM related, visual arts, International Baccalaureate, gifted and talented, and world languages as the most common magnet themes offered in the U.S. Teachers must become experts in innovative themes which tend to be centered on student interest, inquiry-based, and rooted in real-world, hands-on learning experiences. While community interest plays a large role in identifying magnet themes,

the district must be able to deliver on the promise of the magnet theme they market (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, 2004).

Professional development. Drago-Severson, Blum-DeStefano and Asghar (2013) wrote about the need for leaders to begin to co-prioritize student and adult learning on their campuses. While a continued movement toward perfecting pedagogy is a necessity for all educators in all learning environments, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) (2004) emphasized the importance of professional development to the implementation of new magnet programs. They noted that any new school will require time for the principal or school leader to guide teachers toward advancing their pedagogical repertoire, but, "Add in the need to hone expertise in a particular theme and to align thematic standards with required state standards, and the time demands grow even more intense" (p. 11). The OII pointed out that in addition to a principal focused on developing understanding of the magnet theme, "Overall, districts and school sites agree that having someone serve as the magnet coordinator in each school is important" (p. 12).

Odden (2012) identified professional learning as a critical investment in improving schools in the face of tight budgets. He advocated for on-site coaching for teachers, time over the summer for lesson planning and learning, and establishing a daily schedule which allows for collaboration time for teachers. Embracing and growing a magnet theme will require the school leader to grow his or her faculty.

Academic excellence. As part of the magnet proposal, district and school leaders must set goals for academic performance which decrease the achievement gap between White and non-White students disaggregated into each racial sub-group. The magnet

proposal should include plans for academic support for students who show below target achievement, as well as a well-defined plan for academic enrichment for students achieving at grade level and above. Siegel-Hawley and Frankenberg (2011) identified a possible contributing factor to academic success at magnet schools. They said, "peer support for academic achievement was stronger in magnets than in non-magnet city schools" (p. 2).

High quality instructional systems. In order to achieve the diversity, professional learning, and academic excellence expected of a quality magnet school, districts must create systems of support to put these goals in place and monitor implementation. Part of creating these systems is putting the right people in positions to influence the growth of the program. The OII advocates for principal selection based on an understanding of the magnet theme and an enthusiasm to see the vision for the school realized. Additionally, OII representatives point to the need for a district level advocate for magnet programs to help ensure the principal has what he or she needs to drive the mission in the school (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, 2004). Odden (2012) further identified a need for accountability measures and a solid plan of action as not only a system wide support, but also a cost saving measure. Magnet programs require significant fiscal support, but without both a plan for the implementation as well as a plan for accountability, it is likely the district leaders will not recoup a return on their investment in the program.

Family and community partnerships. Magnet programs are meant to attract students and families to travel outside their closer, school zones. The OII cited that many districts lead the charge to open new magnet schools by rooting the vision for the

program in needs expressed by the targeted community. Districts like Duval County, Florida, surveyed families to identify the most attractive magnet themes (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, 2004). District personnel then designed programs to fill their expressed needs. This first step ultimately makes the marketing of the programs much more successful as the school leaders already know they are offering a desired product, and then family and community partnerships can go much further to transform the school.

Bokas in *Building Powerful Learning Environments: From Schools to Communities* (2017) pointed out that the learning environment is not contained in the walls of the schoolhouse. Parents, families, and communities are the powerful first teachers to all students and continue to provide guidance and influence over their entire lives. Bokas provided strategies for how to complete the students' circle of influence and create partnerships for learning. Creating the partnership means to move beyond one direction communication around student learning in favor of a relationship which seeks input and understanding in a culture of trust and empathy (Bokas, 2017). The inclusion of parental and community voices in the planning and accountability measures lays the groundwork for the creation of these relationships. Once these relationships are initiated, it is important that school leaders are selected who will nurture them.

Policy Statement

First, a Magnet Advisory Team, consisting of interdepartmental leaders, must be formed to provide the benefit of multiple perspectives as plans for the new magnet school are developed. I recommend that no new magnet schools are permitted to be created or closed without the approval of the Magnet Advisory Team, a group of district level

leaders across multiple departments, the school principal, and teacher representation, including the teachers' union. The Magnet Advisory Team will review a proposal to create a new magnet program. The proposal will address the established purpose of the new program and the 4 Cs, context, conditions, culture, and competencies (Wagner et al., 2006), to determine the viability of the program. Approval for new programs will be determined by whether the new program can meet the following conditions:

- Funding is adequate to provide for professional development for the entire faculty and staff, including administrators, in year one of implementing a new magnet program.
- Magnet lead teachers must be included to shepherd magnet theme development at the school.
- School enrollment is below 85% of maximum enrollment.
- The teachers' union agrees to additional requirements for magnet teachers.
- Regular program implementation reviews will be conducted bi-annually.

I recommend an extensive review process as successful magnet program implementation requires significant resources. Not only are these programs financially demanding, but they require more time and energy of the school's faculty and staff and district staff in order to support them properly, than schools not offering specific, theme-based instruction. If the school district is not in a position to expend the resources required to fulfill the needs of the program, then district leaders should reexamine the problem which the magnet program is meant to address and consider other options.

If district administrators adhere to this policy, school principals will not be able to spontaneously create or close programs. There will be no magnet programs in name only,

as each program will be properly staffed and have the training and resources teachers and administrators need to create authentic experiences for students. Under this policy, parents can be sure that when selecting a magnet program for their child, their child will experience an innovative curriculum, which celebrates student diversity and delivers on promises made during marketing and recruitment regarding theme based, innovative curriculum, a diverse learning environment, and a high level of academic achievement among all students.

The review process will be extended beyond the creation of the program to include regular evaluation of the program to ensure continued efficacy. Once district administrators have selected school leaders, hired teachers, and marketed the program, it will be easy for the school to be removed from high priority projects requiring the daily attention of district leaders. New concerns often emerge to compete for attention daily. Heifetz et al. (2009), however, urged leaders to maintain focus on the adaptive change. The school's transition will likely move teachers, school administrators, and district level leaders out of their comfort zones. It will be critical for the Magnet Advisory Team to see themselves as allies to help distribute the burden of change. This could look like all of the players in the Curriculum and Instruction Department coming together with an understanding of how their particular subject areas might look different when viewed through the lens of the magnet theme than seen in a non-magnet, traditional neighborhood school.

Analysis of Needs

The analysis of needs focuses the discussion of the policy governing the approval of new magnet programs through six distinct lenses. Through consideration of the policy

from multiple perspectives, I will illustrate how the proposed policy will facilitate good stewardship of resources. By carefully crafting a governing policy, the district leaders can improve educational opportunities for all students through the creation of new magnet programs.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement (OII) (2004) magnet program planning document outlines a process, which district leaders can take to plan and implement new programs. They list several key steps to creating new magnet programs, which have proven successful in districts across the nation. These include creating broad district level buy-in, careful choice of school-based leaders and staff, and the importance of parent and community involvement in the development of the new magnet program. The OII's document, Magnet School Development Framework, provided guidance for schools and districts to utilize in the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of magnet programs as part of their guidance for schools and school districts applying for the MSAP grant (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, 2018). My policy advocacy is similar in many ways to the guidance provided by OII; however, not all schools whose leaders apply will receive the MSAP grant. For these schools, the fiscal implications of magnet programs, if not acknowledged, and accounted for in district budgets, are likely to create significant barriers.

Economic analysis. When planning the implementation of new magnet programs, district leaders must consider the sustainability of the program as well as the new program's impact on existing magnet programs in the district. New programs will require additional staff at the district level to support the development of the magnet theme at each of the school sites without removing supports from existing programs. The district under study had few supports in place specific to magnet programs at the district level prior to the initiation of seven new magnet programs in 2017. When the position of coordinator of magnet programs was added, the person in that position was tasked with providing support to over 20 magnet programs at 17 schools, including the seven new programs. While it is important to note that the beginning stages of magnet program implementation require more attention than that of an established program, attention must be given to the long-term sustainability of all magnet programs. Funding must be secured to sustain support over time.

Many school districts utilize the Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) grant to fund the development of magnet programs, including district positions in magnet departments, marketing resources, and curriculum specialists. The challenge with utilizing grants, is that they are not a long-term solution to the funding challenge. After the life of the grant, which is three to five years in the case of the MSAP grant, the magnet programs will still need financial support to fund magnet specific positions, marketing and recruitment efforts, and ongoing professional development. Indeed, the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (the office now governing this process), in their request for proposal, requires districts to account for long term financial sustainability as a part of their MSAP application process (2019, p.

13878). While some of the funding needs may diminish over time, new faculty or administrators will need to be trained and new materials purchased as the program matures. Additionally, as seen in the district I studied, when districts rely on competitive grants to fund projects, their applications may not be awarded, causing the district to struggle to adequately fund their projects.

Additional funding sources school leaders have utilized to finance the professional development, staffing, and materials acquisition required during the startup of a new magnet program include the use of title funds, including Title I, Title II, and Title IV. However, these sources do not provide a funding panacea. District and school leaders must be cautious not to supplant funds for district expenses with federal funds. Rather these federal dollars are meant to buttress existing budget plans to provide schools with the capital needed to assist in success of the program.

Of these funding sources, Title IV, is most open to interpretation as compared to other federal funding grants, and it is specifically allocated to support enrichment programs at schools. Title IV Part A is a federal entitlement grant with the purpose of providing support for enrichment, safe and healthy schools, and the effective use of technology. District leaders can make an argument that magnet programs such as schools for the arts or Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math (STEAM) fall directly into the guidelines for Title IV Projects. Supporting the arts, STEAM, and accelerated programming are specifically mentioned in the grant guidance provided by the Department of Education, making this grant useful to budget-stretched districts (U. S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019).

Given the important role that magnet programs serve to assist in school district integration and equity plans, it is interesting that not all states explicitly identify magnet schools' status for additional full-time equivalency (FTE) subsidies. States that do provide for additional funding for some programs like Cambridge and International Baccalaureate, provide a long-term solution for magnet programs within the same theme or even their feeder schools. This funding leaves programs which do not benefit from these plans still struggling to find resources to keep their magnet programs viable. With these limitations in mind, it is imperative that district leaders proposing new magnet programs identify clear funding streams for their new initiatives, which are sustainable over a long term. Ayscue et al. (2017) pointed out the imperative need for a unified commitment among high-level district leaders to the long-term success of magnet programs. Even when MSAP funding is utilized in the initial development of the magnet program, it is only a short-term funding solution. Ideally, districts will plan fiscal support not dependent on short-term grants to maintain the magnet program. Without long-term financial commitment the initial investment will not sustain the magnet program over time.

Social analysis. Magnet programs were created to increase the racial diversity in school districts responding to desegregation orders (Betts, et al., 2016, p. 1). As such, their legacy is to maintain a high level of racial diversity and bring parents and communities together in support of the program. The approval process for new magnet programs must include enrollment and recruitment goals for each subgroup and plans for capitalizing on the racially diverse enrollment to reach out to multiple groups within the community, creating a support coalition with broad perspectives and experiences.

Recent trends across the nation point to districts becoming increasingly segregated as White families move from city centers to the suburbs and avail themselves of school choice options, including vouchers, which provide funding for parents to utilize at private schools while the percentage of non-White students has increased across the nation (Pew Research Center, 2007). According to the Pew report, "Roughly three-in-ten Hispanic (29%) and Black (31%) students attended schools in 2005-06 that were nearly all-minority" (para 4).

As part of the approval process for new magnet programs in the school district under study, the district leaders should look for areas where the addition of a magnet program would reduce minority isolation. Minority isolation occurs when minority students' exposure to White students is dramatically reduced. The social benefits of increased exposure to students of multiple backgrounds include a reduction in systemic racism and a stronger, more diverse community. Schools characterized by minority isolation, often also experience a higher concentration of impoverished students (Boschma & Brownstein, 2016). The magnet theme selected should be chosen considering its ability to attract students to increase diversity.

Political analysis. School choice is a term with a high level of political connotation and is hotly debated. School choice can include charter schools, vouchers for private school tuition, controlled open enrollment in public school districts, private schools, virtual schools, homeschools, and hybrid combinations of homeschool and other options. The current political climate favors school choice; however, the term is often used to refer to charter schools and voucher programs. Magnet schools, the original public school choice option, still maintains a place in the political climate.

The school choice model as advocated under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which compared education to the capitalist market where competition is said to drive improvement, is now seen by previous advocates as a misguided reform effort. In fact, Ravitch (2014) refuted the entire premise that our schools are in decline at all. She pointed to the false comparison between schools now and the "successful" schools of the past. She pointed out that the schools of the past were not expected to provide equitable learning opportunities across racial and economic sub-groups. She stated, "Contrary to popular myth, the scores on the non-stakes federal tests—The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)—are at an all-time high for students who are White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian" (2014, p. 36). She also noted the increasing graduation rate across the country and the continued increase in college enrollments (2014).

Yet, President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind (2001), and President Barrack Obama's Race to the Top (2011) education policies provided support of charter schools, including guidelines for traditional public schools not meeting standardized testing achievement levels to convert to charter schools, which would theoretically be able to respond to students' needs more efficiently once bureaucracy was removed (Logan, 2018). While many charter schools are successful at raising academic achievement in a fully integrative, inclusive environment, unless specified in the school's charter with the overseeing district, they will not have diversity enrollment goals. Additionally, charter schools have fewer oversights than their traditional public school counterparts (Logan, 2018).

Magnet programs, as a school option for parents within the traditional public school district, are designed to offer many of the attractive qualities parents seek when

looking at a charter school. However, magnet programs, because they are required to meet all the requirements of any district public school, and are supported by district structures, offer choice with far less risk. Reports released by the Network for Public Education, raised alarms about federal funding of failing charter schools and identified schools that received funding and never opened (Network for Public Education, 2019).

Legal analysis. The district in this study has been released from court ordered desegregation measures for less than fifteen years. The district leaders reached unitary status by creating two magnet elementary programs, creating a uniform application process for all special assignment requests, targeting recruitment of minority educators for both teaching and leadership positions, and developed a provision for transportation for all students granted majority-minority transfers (citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

Yet, recent zoning change proposals made by school board members, had they been enacted, would have caused enrollment at several elementary schools to skew toward racial isolation. For this reason, district leaders and school principals must take into consideration the effect the magnet program will have on district enrollment as a whole. New magnet school proposals must include a five-year projection showing possible scenarios to help decision makers to plan for the long term to ensure that the new program will not cause a situation which would potentially open the district for future litigation.

Although a provision in the unitary status decree specifically called for the district to offer transportation to students, students are no longer offered special assignment transfers for majority-minority placements. Essentially, students are being recruited to

attend schools outside their zone, but no support for transportation is offered. The unitary status states that the court no longer sees there is any de jure segregation; however, the recension of transportation services creates a barrier for attendance for families lacking the means to transport students across the large area the district covers.

Ayscue, et al., (2017) cited transportation as a key element to the success of magnet programs, based on the input of magnet directors across the nation. They pointed out that, "Without free and accessible transportation, magnet schools are only a realistic option for those families with the resources and flexibility to provide their children with transportation (often middle- to upper-class families)" (p. 10). This disparity is easily apparent in the findings of my study. The school located in the central area of the district does not offer transportation, and offers limited seats in their after school program making it one of the school district's smallest after school programs despite the school being above average in number of total students enrolled. The school also has one of the lowest percentages of students who qualify for free or reduced priced lunch (Citation withheld to protect confidentiality).

The court mandated that a unified application process for all out of area assignments be created. In recent years, the school district under study has created a unified system through which parents are able to apply to all out of area schools, including magnet programs. All school choice options have utilized the same online system since 2018, though schools previously handled magnet applications at the school site.

New magnet program proposals must include resources to support the Student Assignment Office in the management of additional magnet applications. Additionally,

new magnet schools should not include standardized or IQ testing scores or grade requirements for admittance in order to maintain equitable access to all students. All offers for seats at magnet schools should result from randomized lotteries conducted by district office leaders in order to maintain an arms-length control over enrollment.

Moral and ethical analysis. Education leaders have a moral and ethical obligation to deliver on promises made to parents and the community when they advertise magnet programs. Currently, in the district under study, magnet programs are associated with advanced programs rather than their program themes. This is a result of the early magnet programs requiring gifted screening for admittance in the 1990s.

In order to change the perceptions of magnet programs in the district, new magnet program proposals should include plans for magnet theme implementation and stated goals for number of hours of magnet themed instruction per year over the first five years of implementation. Each proposal must include a professional development plan which will guide teachers, the magnet lead teacher, and administrators through their magnet theme development, aiding the school to meet the hours per year goal of magnet themed instruction.

In my professional experience as a magnet lead teacher at three developing magnet programs in three school districts, each had a goal for the number of hours when instruction supported the magnet theme. For schools seeking to offer licensed programs, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, the required number of hours of theme-based instruction may be mandated by the licensing organization. In the case of the IB, at the middle school level, the number of hours of required theme-based instruction is 50 per year (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2014).

Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

Because a critical component of the implementation plan requires the establishment of magnet lead teacher positions at all schools in order for the program to receive approval, it is important to anticipate the need for building a culture within the school which values multiple forms of leadership. The magnet lead teacher position, required under the new process as new magnet programs are proposed, is a teacher leader position to serve as an advisor to administrators, a coach to faculty, and a liaison with the district's magnet office. Because the person in this position must hold several roles, there is a need for the school as a whole, and specifically administrators, to understand the value of the role.

By requiring the magnet lead teacher position at each school, the Magnet Advisory Team can set the expectation for increased parent and community involvement at the school, as there will be a person in a position tasked with shepherding those relationships. Faculty at the school must understand that a critical element of teaching at a magnet program is showcasing how the teaching reflects the magnet theme and making that apparent to students and parents of both students presently enrolled, as well as for students to whom the magnet lead teacher is marketing the program.

This shift is critical for teachers and administrators to understand. Marketing the school requires an attention to detail that may be new to some educators who may not have been concerned about appearances as much as results. Because the critical point of magnet schools is to attract new students from beyond the original school zone, the school must create an environment that is attractive to new families. While academic

excellence is imperative, prospective families must be enticed first before they can be sold on the theme and the academic achievement of the school.

This level of presentation, the creation of magnet themed units of instruction, and the professional development required to create these changes in the school will require an additional time commitment of faculty and staff. The proposal for a new magnet program must include an agreement with the teachers' union. Before new magnet programs are created, the Magnet Advisory Team must work with the teachers' union to create acceptable guidelines and expectations for faculties at magnet schools. Ayscue et al. (2017) found that many districts across the nation, understanding the additional requirement of adding themed-based instruction to teachers' already heavy task, required negotiation and clear expectations. Avscue et al. included a memorandum of agreement, which outlined the scope of work for the magnet lead teacher specifically (2017). In my experience in several districts, I have seen memoranda of agreements for both magnet lead teachers as well as classroom teachers employed at magnet schools.

Conclusion

In order to increase the effectiveness of district support for magnet schools and programs, a thorough review process which controls the creation, change, or closure of all new or existing magnet programs must be created. When district leaders or principals propose new magnet programs, they must include critical elements for their success, including a financial plan, staffing plan, professional development plan and all applications must receive approval and feedback from the Magnet Advisory Team. By planning for the long-term success of the program prior to beginning the implementation of the program, school district leaders can be assured to maximize their resources and

create a quality learning experience which increases and supports diversity, provides an environment of academic excellence and connects to the community. In summary the following guidelines must be in place in order for the Magnet Advisory Team to approve a new program:

- Funding is adequate to:
    - Provide for professional development for the entire faculty and staff, including administrators, in year one of implementing a new magnet program.
    - Provide curriculum materials necessary to the magnet theme be replaced or updated as the program matures.
    - Fund marketing and recruitment efforts to meet the enrollment and diversity goals.
- Magnet lead teachers must be included in staffing plans to shepherd magnet theme development at the school.
- School enrollment is below 85% of maximum enrollment and diversity goals are set to match the enrollment within the district.
- Transportation is provided to ensure equitable access.
- The teachers' union agrees to additional requirements for magnet teachers.
- Regular program implementation reviews are conducted bi-annually including a review of the taught curriculum to ensure a minimum of 50 hours of magnet themed instruction.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

The purpose of this evaluation was to examine the supports put into place at the school district level to assist new magnet programs and to determine the effect that the supports had on the success of new programs. The district in this study initiated the creation of six new magnet programs, adding a seventh within a year. A change in the expected funding thwarted initial plans for the launch of these programs. The funding deficit resulted in fewer district staff to support their development, the elimination of critical supports at the school level, and fewer material resources to needed to train teachers to create magnet themed curriculum. While district leaders across multiple departments collaborated on the initial plan, when funding fell through, the initial planning team did not regroup to discuss modifications to the plan or the possibility of postponing the project.

It was clear from studying the strategic plans written by districts across the nation that they could not envision entering into the formation of multiple new magnet programs without significant resources. All plans submitted to the Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement as part of the Magnet Schools Assistance Program grant application for 2017 included requests for millions of dollars per new program to be used both at the school site and at the district level to build institutional supports as the programs took shape. Despite the lack of capital, both human and financial, the district under study initiated the plan, attempting to stay as close to the original vision as possible.

Marshalling and distributing finite resources is a critical task for leaders in any school district. They must constantly weigh the return on investment from one course compared to another and the degree to which each action will positively impact students' academic achievement. Creating a roadmap to minimize missteps would ensure that critical resources are channeled to the most productive means possible, improving instruction and ensuring student success.

Further, establishing clear protocols for the creation of new magnet programs requires institutional knowledge which exists beyond the tenure of current district decision makers. In a time when administrators in district positions as well as at the principal level experience a greater degree of change than in past eras, policies and procedures can aid in maintaining operations during times of transition.

Discussion

In delving into the planning process and early implementation of the district's seven new magnets, I learned how vital collaboration is to the success of any new initiative. It is impossible to achieve a multi-faceted view of a challenge from only the perspective of a single person's experience. While I have extensive experience working in and with magnet schools, collaborating with district leaders who have institutional knowledge about past decisions which led to current contexts and conditions helps me to understand the decisions and actions which led to the current context. The work of creating a magnet program should not begin at the schoolhouse door, rather it should begin with creating district and school level capacity for extensive change. This study helped me identify the importance of creating a coalition to examine these plans.

One of my findings during this process was that as the program implementation progressed, collaboration among executive level leaders about whether the new magnet programs were meeting their goals declined and no joint accountability efforts were in place to provide perspective on growth areas. These deficiencies formed the basis of my policy plan, which requires a collaborative approach to both the creation of new programs as well progress monitoring for existing magnets.

The policy for which I am advocating addresses several critical issues I discovered during my study. The first and defining challenge for all seven schools was securing sufficient funding for the development of these programs. A cornerstone of my policy advocacy is a requirement that district leaders proposing new programs must identify a funding source which is sustainable long-term. Over the course of the study, my understanding of what adequate funding means has grown.

Initially, I explored funds expended at the school level on staffing, materials, curriculum, and professional development. Over the course of my investigation and as I studied the initial plan leaders in the district under study drafted, as well as plans drafted from leaders in other districts, I expanded my understanding to include system-wide supports which may be stressed by the creation of new programs. For example, if a leader in the magnet office supports 20 magnet programs, the leader may not be able to continue to provide support to existing programs while providing the intensive guidance new programs need as school leaders begin the development of their programs. Additional resources in the form of staffing at the district level may be required to assure that all schools receive the attention they require.

Leadership Lessons

The most important lesson I learned over the course of this study is that regardless of how experienced a leader may be in his or her field, if he or she does not seek the council of others, proposed solutions will be one dimensional, only considering the perspective and experience of the one person and perhaps missing the potential impact to people or groups outside of their daily experience. The process of examining the problem in this study from multiple perspectives has created a habit of mind that helps me to consider not only how a decision will impact a program, but also what existing realities may contribute to the success or failure of the proposed solution. Over the last 15 years, I have worked in leadership positions within magnet schools as well as at the district level providing support for programs. I see, now, that the success of a venture with the magnitude of a new magnet program requires a critical understanding of the problem the program is meant to address, and a coalition of district level champions, school based supporters, and community leaders sharing a vision and goals which the new magnet program is designed to address. Kotter and Cohen (2002) stated, "If the key players are not playing key roles in the guiding team, that usually means their sense of urgency is too low and their complacency or anger or fear too high" (p. 59). Essentially, if I want my projects to have a greater impact across the district, and I want to move with a sense of urgency, this broad-based participation is critical.

As I continue to support magnet program implementation in my work capacity, I will consider each challenge by examining the context in which the program was created and in which it currently exists, the culture at both the district and school levels, the conditions in which the program is operating, and the competencies found within all

levels of stakeholders. Wagner et al. (2006) reminded us that, “If your progress is slowed or stuck, consider that your light needs to shine more broadly, not more intensely” (p. 228). We must make sure to illuminate all areas of the challenge to truly see the potential solutions rather than narrowly focus on one facet of the change at hand.

Conclusion

At the heart of this study is the belief that we must come together as a society and learn to celebrate our differences in order to strengthen our community. Magnet programs, designed to create environments where students of different backgrounds come together to learn and grow, are a critical tool for school districts to foster diversity in our schools. The mission of magnet programs is critical to the continued effort to provide equitable access to exemplary academic opportunities for all children, and it requires care and planning to achieve. Working together to draft and carry out comprehensive plans, leaders from multiple district-level departments can create opportunities for students to receive high-quality academic experiences which build the foundation of our future citizenry.

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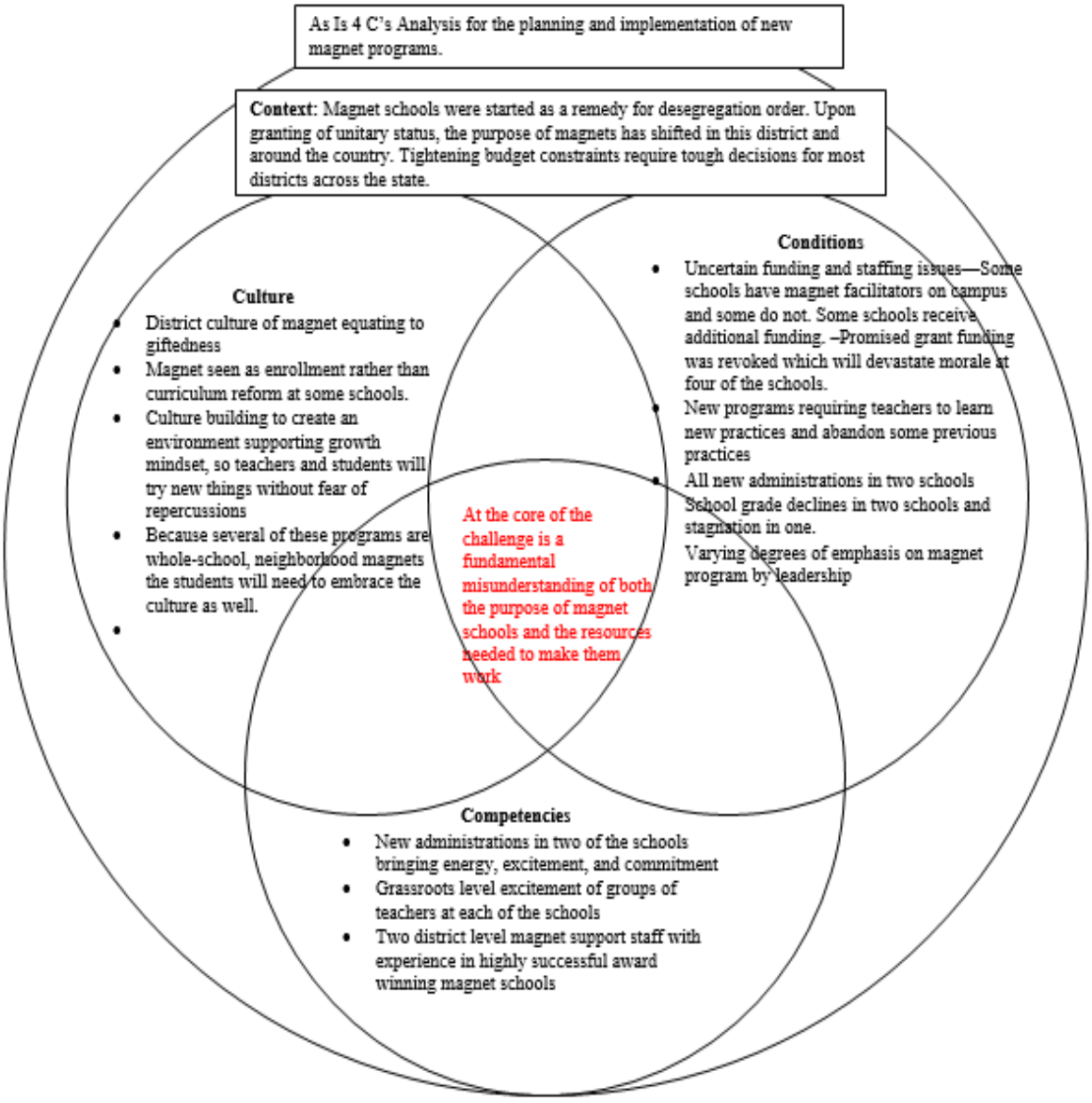
Appendices

Appendix A

"As Is" 4 Cs Analysis



Appendix B

Title IV Budget 2017-2020

District Title IV Part A Budgets 2017-2020

	Title IV Part A* Budget 2017-2018	Title IV Part A Budget 2018-2019	Revised Title IV Part A Budget 2018-2019	Title IV Part A Budget 2019-2020
Salaries	$0	$185,400.00	$0	$0
Salaries Fringe	$0	$63,224.00	$0	$0
Travel	$0	$44,452.00	$48,542.00*	$93,953.00
Equipment	$41,046.00	$98,500.00	$232,116.00	$0
Supplies/ Materials	$80,384.63	$253,600.00	$272,699.00	$49,574.00
Contractual	$220,000.00	$383,000	$152,325.98	$321,000.00
Other	$5,360.00	$0	$3,240.00	$0
Total Direct Costs	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total Indirect Costs	$17,594.00	$52,249.00	$44,084.74	$58,770.00
Training Stipends	$13,500.00	$18,000.00	$18,000.00	$76,500.00
Training Fringe	$1,220.00	$1613.00	$1613.00	$6854.00
Private School Allocation	$0	$0	$56,128.02	$65,455.00
Additional Projects	$0	$0	$337,515.00	$522,768.00
Total	$379,104.63	$1,100,038.00	$1166.264.00	$1,194,874

Note: Due to the reduction in expected budget, this year reflects four schools, rather than six.

Appendix C

Logic Model for 2017 Magnet Schools Assistance Program

Resources	Activities	Outputs	Short-term Outcomes	Medium-Term Outcomes	Long-term Outcomes
4 District administrative Staff with expertise in Magnet Program (In-Kind part-time) 4 District content specialist with expertise in Magnet Program (1 In-Kind 3 MSAP full-time) $ 3 million in MSAP funds Knowledge about evidenced-based strategies	Educate community about magnet school offering through partnerships and feeder schools. Implement school choice of school and magnet program lottery. Provide district-wide professional development opportunities on evidenced based strategies that promote racial integration. Provide infrastructure to support magnet program	Over 1200 informational packages distributed. 20 in-person informational sessions conducted (Parent Involvement). Student choice of school and magnet program lottery. Provide professional development on cultural competency (Professional Learning Communities).	Increase community awareness about magnet schools. Increase enrollment of minority students. Improved parent's knowledge and perception of magnet schools.	Increased community and parent support for magnet schools. Increase socioeconomic and racial diversity in magnet school. Improved parent relations Institutionalization of evidenced-based strategies. Improved academic achievement. Improved preparation for college and STEAM related careers	Decreased disparities in graduation rates. Increased rates of college acceptance and attendance. Increased sense of belonging and school bonding among minority students.

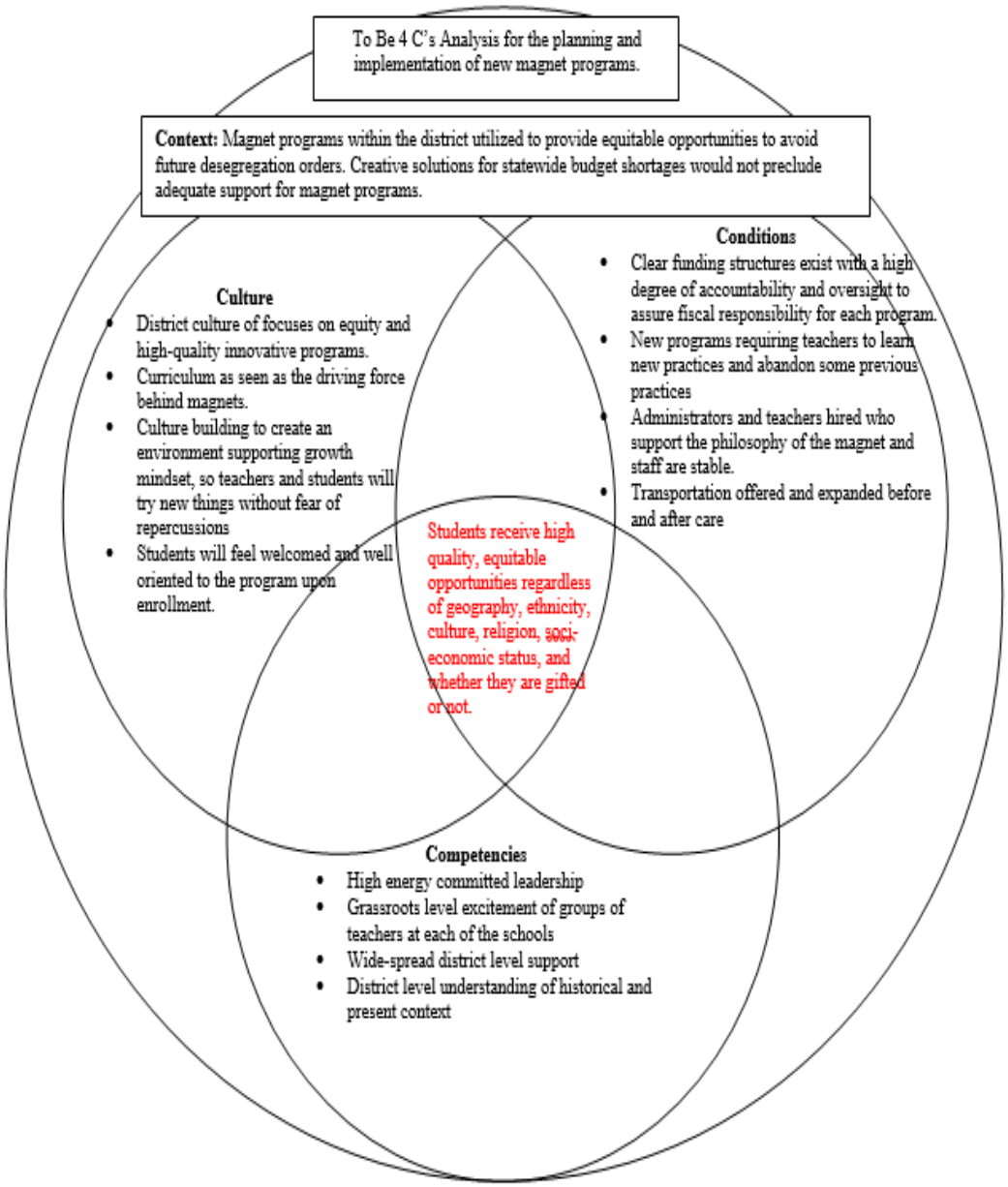
				Reduce minority isolation groups	
6 Magnet Schools	**6 Magnet Schools**	**6 Magnet Schools**	**6 Magnet Schools**		
Teachers and administrators Lead Magnet Teacher Knowledge about evidenced-based strategies	Integrate STEAM curriculum across schools Develop partnerships with local STEAM entities Develop professional development for teachers and administrators Offer parent engagement opportunities	Partnerships established. Curriculum restructured.	Increase minority student interest in STEAM careers. Improve parent-teacher-student relations. Enhance instructional competencies for teachers. Enhance understanding of cultural competency		

Context

- Significance and diverse populations needing comprehensive achievement related support.
- Proposed schools are under capacity and disproportionate percentage of minorities
- Current magnet schools were authorized for unitary status.

Appendix D

"To-Be" 4 Cs Analysis



Appendix E

Strategies and Action Chart

Strategies	Actions
Create a sense of urgency.	1. Gather stakeholders in the school choice office, area directors, secondary education, elementary education, and finance departments to discuss the effects of district policies on magnet programs. 2. Stakeholders will establish goals relating to the five pillars of magnet programs: diversity, innovative curriculum and professional development, academic excellence, high quality instructional systems and family and community partnerships. Chief among these goals is to increase minority participation, especially in high school programs with advanced curriculum, and provide equitable access to high quality programs across the school district. 3. A transportation system including hub stops will be created to support magnet programs. 4. Referendum dollars utilized for the support of CTE programs will be evenly distributed to include equitable funding for all magnet programs and district support personnel. 5. An agreement of expectations for magnet school principals, assistant principals, and teachers will be created and signed by all instructional personnel at magnet programs. The agreement will clearly establish expectations of for each program and will be reviewed annually.

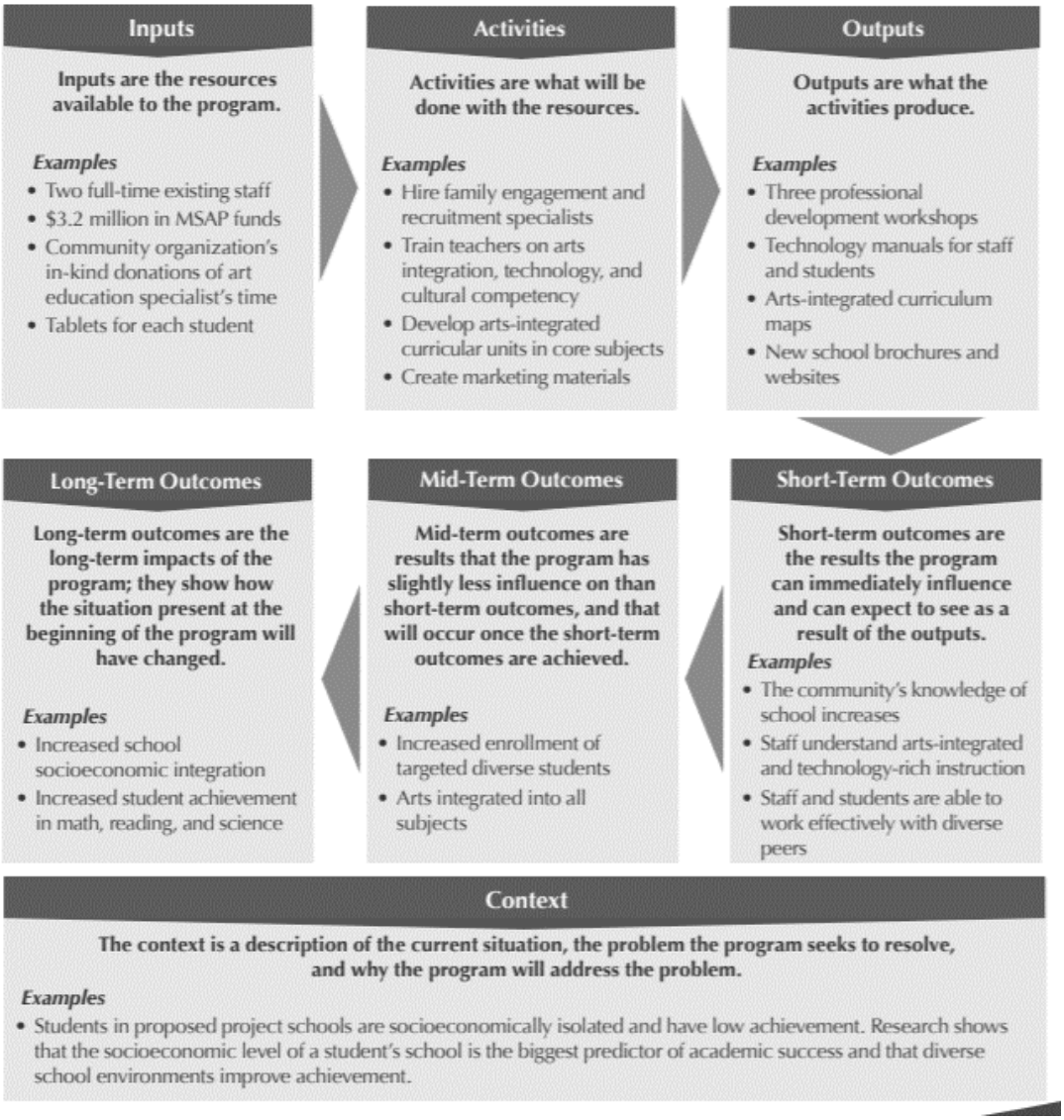
Build a guiding coalition.	1. The Superintendent will create a Magnet Advisory Team, consisting of Directors in Curriculum and Instruction, and Teaching and Learning to do biannual reviews at each program. The Magnet Advisory Team will seek participation in the creation of the magnet review rubric through inviting school administrators, magnet lead teachers, academic coaches, and teachers to participate in surveys and a discussion forum to determine program needs. 2. The school choice, district elementary and secondary education teams, interested school administrators, and magnet lead teachers will gather to create a guiding coalition charged with creating a magnet school vision, goals, and implementation rubric that reflects local goals and acknowledges local context, culture, competencies, and conditions.
Form a strategic vision and initiatives.	1. Using the As Is-To Be exercise, the school choice guiding coalition will work together to provide clear vision to district and school site leaders. The vision statement includes: - School-based leadership chosen in consideration of the needs of the magnet program - Secured and consistent financial support applied equitably across all programs - Accountability with built in support measures

Enable action by removing barriers.	1. The barrier of time is removed through the joint efforts of a cohesive district team to remove initiative fatigue. 2. Establishment of the magnet lead teacher position to guide school improvement in the direction of the five pillars of magnet programs will increase the ability to focus on program fidelity and implementation support at the classroom level. 3. District leaders will overcome barriers of funding by reviewing revenue sources such as federal grants and restructuring current allocation models.
Generate short-term wins.	1. Biannual reviews will be strength focused to highlight elements of the rubric the school is implementing well. 2. A Magnet Programs Update will be created to celebrate innovative instruction and will be distributed electronically to each magnet school once a month. 3. Celebrate short-term wins annually through participation in the Magnet School of America Merit Award program. The merit award recognizes schools for their implementation of practices supporting the five pillars of magnet programs. The writing of the merit award application is a time for school leaders to reflect on practice as well as plan for improvement in areas where more attention is needed.

Sustain acceleration.	1. Because the Magnet Advisory Team will meet regularly about clear and established goals for each program, schools will receive the same information from each member when seeking support. 2. The Magnet Advisory Team will conduct an annual review of the implementation plan to adjust strategies and account for new conditions and changing contexts, competencies, and culture.
Institute change.	1. School leaders will receive support across multiple departments including curriculum, and finance departments, which is consistent and aligned to the established goals set out for the school by the Magnet Advisory Team. 2. The Student Assignment and School Choice Office will create procedures with the help of The Magnet Advisory Team for the creation of new magnet programs, revision of magnet themes at existing programs, and the closing of magnet programs. 3. The district will establish transportation hubs for magnet students to receive transportation services.

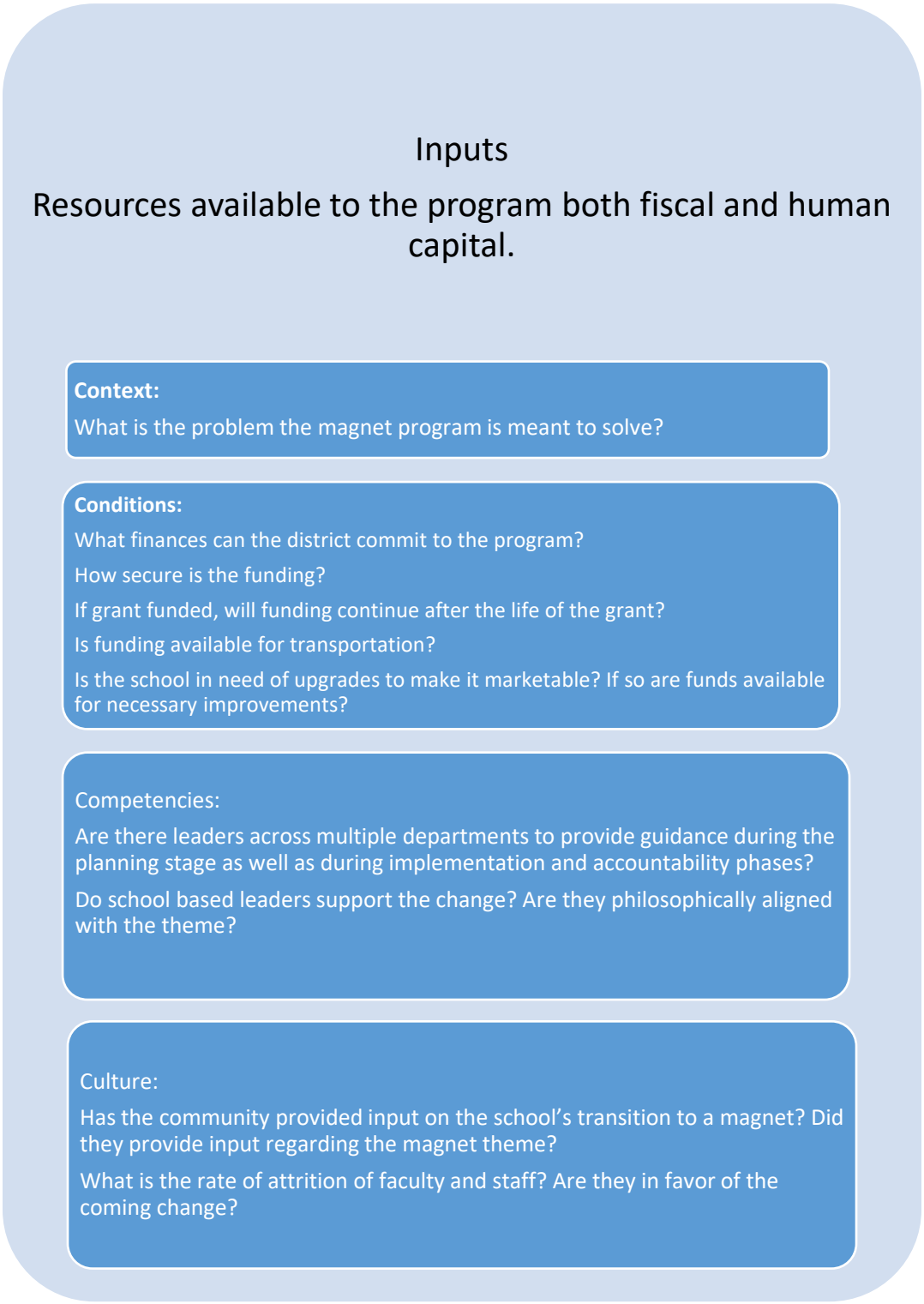
Appendix F

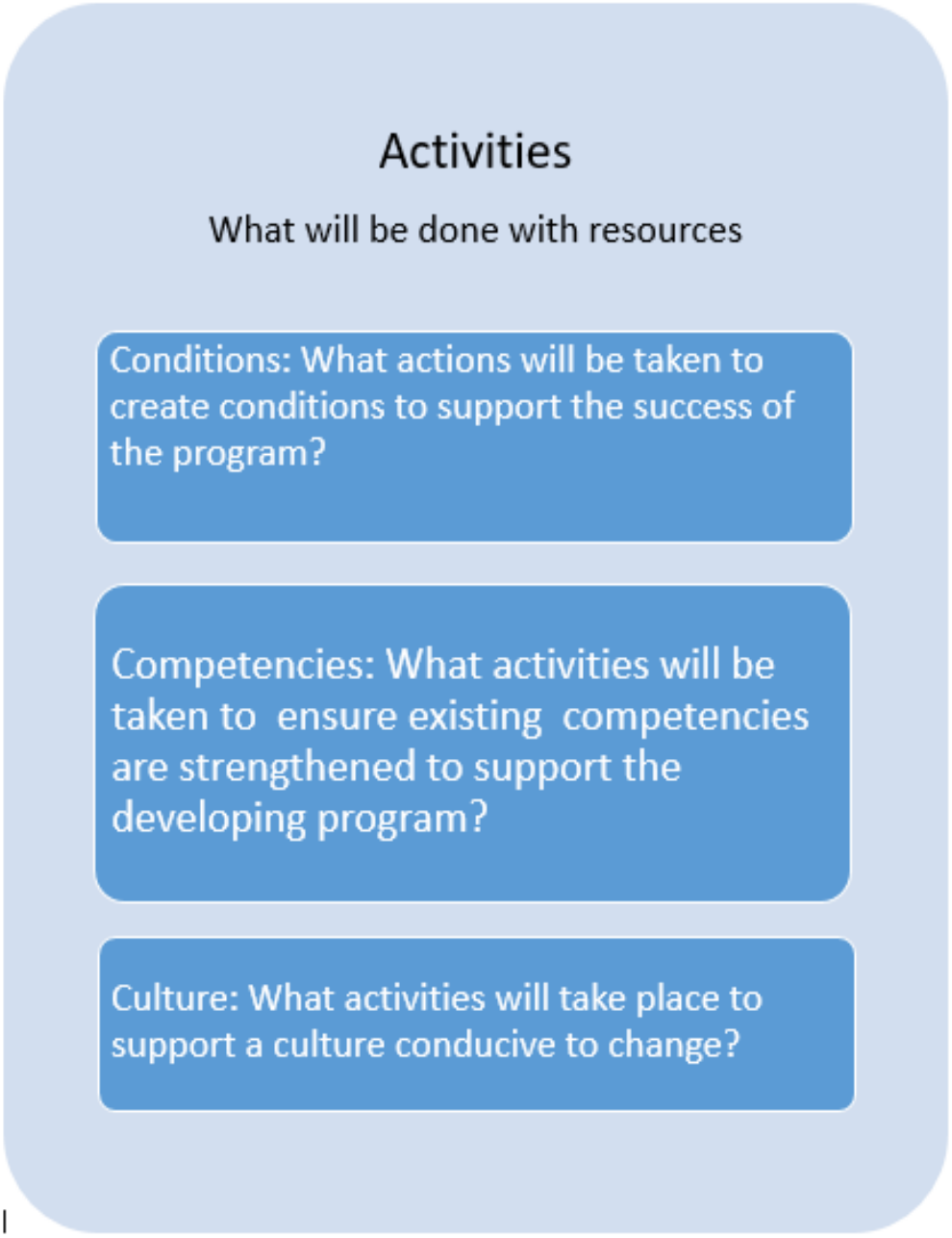
Sample logic model provided in Magnet Schools of America's Magnet Compass (2017) for use on the MSAP grant application (p. 6)

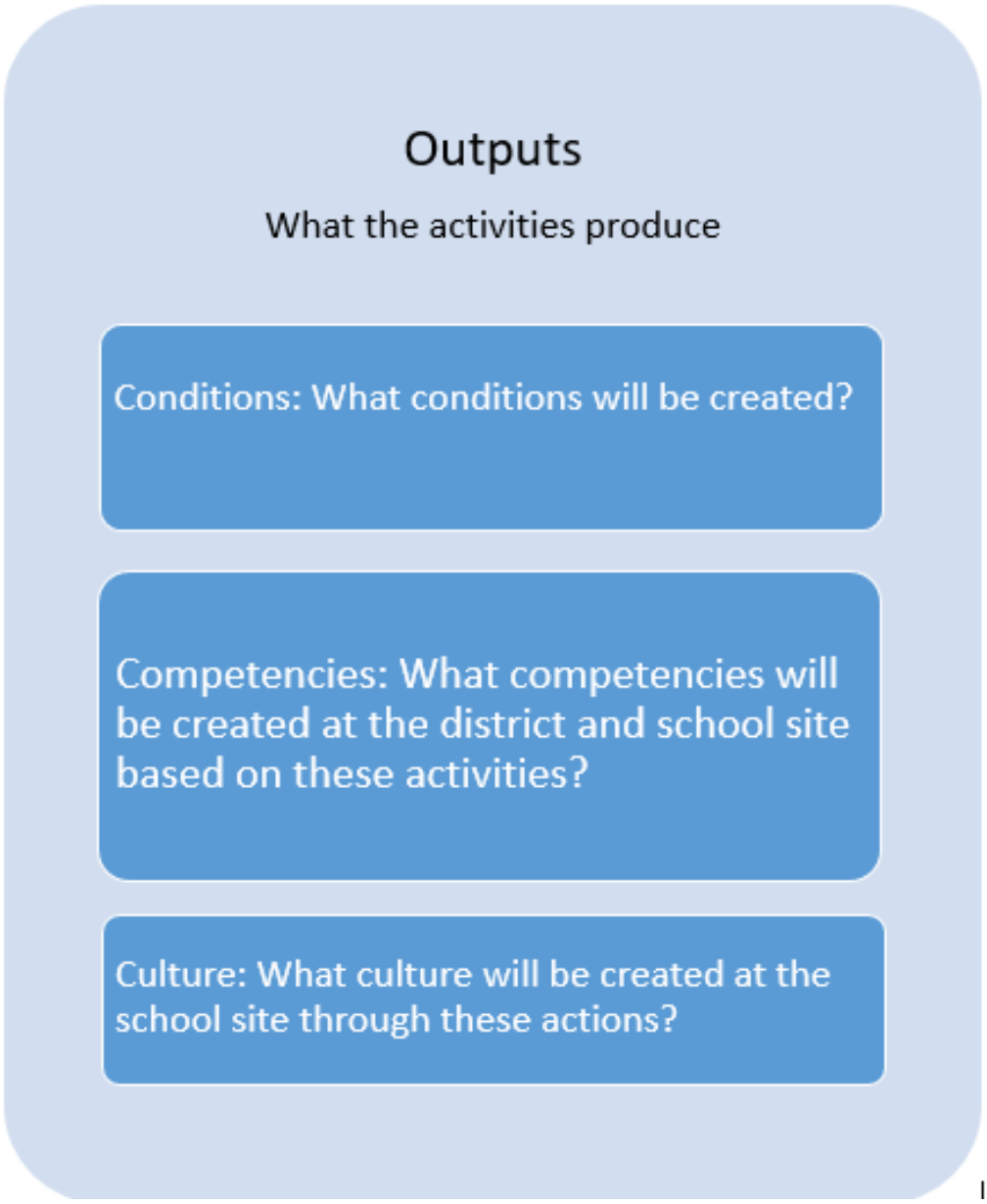


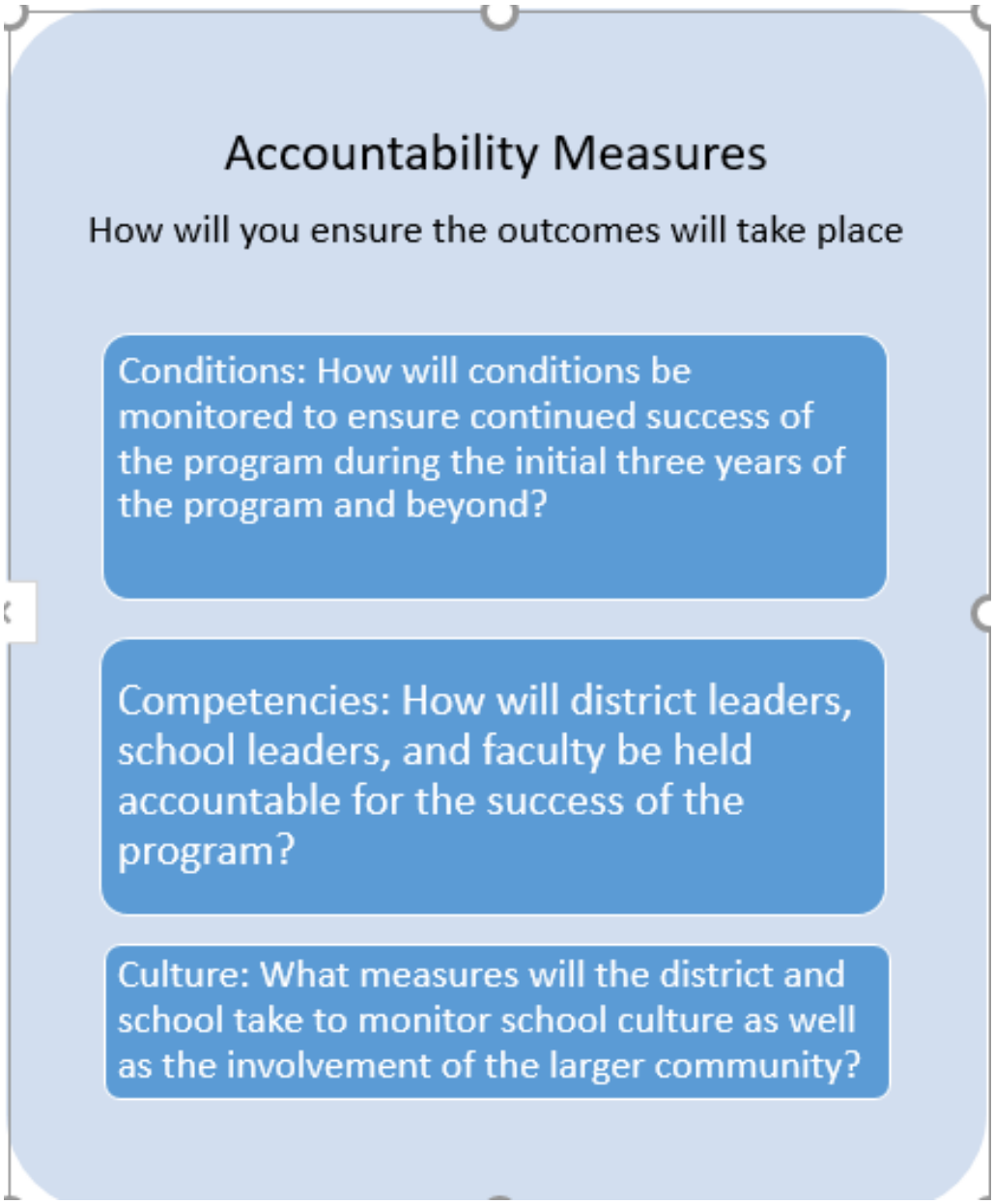
Appendix G

Proposed Logic Model for Use in Planning New Magnet Schools




Activities
What will be done with resources
Conditions: What actions will be taken to create conditions to support the success of the program?
Competencies: What activities will be taken to ensure existing competencies are strengthened to support the developing program?
Culture: What activities will take place to support a culture conducive to change?


Outputs
What the activities produce
Conditions: What conditions will be created?
Competencies: What competencies will be created at the district and school site based on these activities?
Culture: What culture will be created at the school site through these actions?


Accountability Measures
How will you ensure the outcomes will take place
Conditions: How will conditions be monitored to ensure continued success of the program during the initial three years of the program and beyond?
Competencies: How will district leaders, school leaders, and faculty be held accountable for the success of the program?
Culture: What measures will the district and school take to monitor school culture as well as the involvement of the larger community?