Magnet Schools Program, 2005-06

At a Glance

This year marked the 30th year since the establishment of magnet schools in the Dallas Independent School District. The magnet school concept originated as part of the 1976 Desegregation Court order of the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas. The Magnet Schools were expected to promote voluntary desegregation by offering unique educational opportunities through specialty curricula which could not be found within the district’s traditionally configured neighborhood schools. After almost three decades of monitoring the Dallas Independent School District was officially released from the Desegregation Court Order on June 5, 2003. Upon release from the Court order, the district adopted a declaration of Commitments and Covenants to maintain certain programs and policies formerly mandated by that order. The magnet schools program was one of the programs to be maintained. Based on the current assessment 10 magnet high, 10 academy middle, and 7 vanguard elementary schools operated during the 2005-06 school year.

Budget

The 2005-06 budget for magnet high schools was $23,710,943, a decrease of less than 1% over last year’s allocation. The academies and vanguards received a 4% increase that resulted in a budget of $17,161,538. The budget increase range for high schools was less than 1% to 9%, and for academies and vanguards, the range was less than 1% to 27%.

Student Ethnic/Gender Distributions

Of the 8,545 students enrolled in the Magnet Schools Program, 5,349 (62.6%) were in the magnet high schools, 2,147 (25.1%) were enrolled in the academies, and 1,049 (12.3%) were in the vanguard elementary schools. At all levels of the magnet schools program (magnet, academy, and vanguard), except for the Science Magnet and Travis Vanguard, females constituted a greater percentage in the student population. At the high school level, 33.1% of the student population were African American, 52.3% were Hispanic, 11.6% were White, and 3.0% were Other. At the academies, 34.6% of the students were African American, 52.6% were Hispanic, 10.4% were White, and 2.4% were Other. Among the vanguards, 35.2% of the students were African American, 45.1% were Hispanic, 16.4% were White, and 3.3% were Other.

Numerical Demand for Magnet Programs

Grade 9 applications for 2006-07 admissions increased by 14 from the previous year, from 2,302 to 2,316. Magnet applications decreased at all high schools except Skyline CDC and Education and Social Services, which had decreases of 246 and 3, respectively.

Grade 7 applications increased by 24, from 1,826 in 2005-06 to 1,850 for 2006-07. For applications received, Dallas Environmental Science Academy experienced the most significant increase followed by Dealey, Stone, and Holmes, while applications at Rangel, Longfellow, Atwell, Greiner and Travis decreased.

At the vanguard level, for entry Grade 4, applications decreased by 67 for the 2006-07 school year. For vanguard applications, only Travis experienced an increase, while the largest decrease was found at Polk.

Overall, for Grades 4, 7, and 9, applications to the magnet program decreased from 4,592 in 2005-06 to 4,563 for the 2006-07 school year, (a loss of 29).

Achievement Outcomes of Magnet Students

TAKS. Magnet high schools had higher student achievement levels on the TAKS than other district schools, at all grade levels. For Grades 9-11, the mean passing rate in reading was 98.5%, compared to the district’s mean of 77.5%. In mathematics, the district’s mean passing rate was 53.1%, compared to a much higher rate of 88.9% for the magnet high schools.

Academy students scored significantly above district averages at all schools in both Grades 7 and 8. For writing, at Grade 7, the academies reported a mean passing rate of 97.7%
compared to the district’s rate of 79.4%. For reading, at Grades 7-8, the academies posted a mean passing rate of 97.6%, while the district’s rate was 65.4%. In mathematics, the academies posted a mean passing rate of 90.1%, while the mean passing rate posted for the district was 52.0%.

For the vanguards (Grades 4-6), TAKS passing rates were well above the district’s passing rates across all grade levels in all subjects. In Grade 4 writing, the vanguards posted a mean passing rate of 98.4%, while the district’s mean passing rate was 84.1%. In reading, the vanguards reported a mean passing rate of 96.5% compared to the district’s mean passing rate of 78.6%. In mathematics, the mean passing rate for the vanguards was 96.6%, compared to a mean passing rate of 77.6% for the district.

All magnet high schools reported substantially higher rates than the district for Grade 11 students passing all tests taken. (Table 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number Passed All</th>
<th>Percent Passed All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>88.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skyline CDC</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>87.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>BMC</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>87.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESSM</td>
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<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
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<td>92.6</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Science</td>
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<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAG</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Magnets</td>
<td>1,356</td>
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<td>District</td>
<td>7,067</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ITBS. Magnet students were matched with non-magnet students on gender, ethnicity, free/reduced lunch status, and grade level. Results of the 2005-06 comparisons indicated that magnet students scored significantly higher than non-magnet students in reading and mathematics at six grade levels (9, 7-8, and 4-6).

Advanced Placement Examinations. The district’s 2004-05 average of 29% passing on Advanced Placement Examinations taken was equivalent to the 2003-04 average. Four magnet schools (Talented and Gifted, Arts, Science, and Education and Social Services) surpassed this average.

Recommendations

- On a continuous basis, review the magnet program’s specialty offerings and its vertical curriculum alignment and make necessary adjustments when needed.
- Evaluate the curriculum at schools that attract primarily one gender to assess the possibility of creating course offerings that are more appealing to both male and female students.
- The administration should strongly encourage magnet high schools to give added focus to the development of internship programs. Such programs as radio/tv/journalism at the Humanities Magnet should be encouraged to take full advantage of the variety of internship possibilities in the Dallas Metroplex. The Arts Magnet should also be strongly encouraged to develop a viable internship program by utilizing its meaningful contacts and relationships with local organizations and businesses.
- The administration should continue to provide significant budgetary support and adequate resources to all magnet schools to ensure that the specialty programs of these schools continue to serve as a model for the Dallas Independent School District and the community.
- If the magnet program is to continue to be successful, the schools must have access to and cooperation from all campuses and administrators in the district. In addition, all schools should continue to develop creative and innovative recruitment strategies, and their campus budgets should include realistic allocations to implement these strategies.