



SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of the Deputy Superintendent
Office of School Choice

DISCUSSION OF DISTRICT'S MAGNET PROGRAM PLAN
March 2007
Revised August 2008

Introduction:

At the Board of Education workshop on October 16, 2006 the Office of School Choice presented the planned development of the San Diego Unified School District Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) competitive federal grant application. This informational document is in response to the Board's questions regarding magnet programs and the District's development of a plan for the Magnet programs.

SDUSD Magnet Schools Primary Goals and Characteristics

Magnet programs are special learning opportunities for students living within the San Diego Unified School District. Magnet programs attract students by offering unique opportunities for in-depth studies in specific areas of study while meeting rigorous California state curriculum standards. Magnet programs offer a variety of special features to students, which include additional funds for incorporating the magnet program into core academic curriculum, elective courses, enrichment programs and activities, technology, teaching labs and studios, field trips, specially trained teachers, magnet program related professional development, classroom books and materials. Schools also use funds for marketing and recruitment of students. Additionally, many magnet schools work closely with universities and businesses to provide exposure to higher education and career opportunities. San Diego Unified School District's integration policy was first adopted on May 11, 1993. The Magnet program has continued to follow four main goals.

- 1) Magnet schools have diversity as an aspirational goal.
- 2) Magnet schools seek to improve achievement for all students participating in the school program by enhancing student learning and narrowing the achievement gap.
- 3) Magnet schools provide a distinctive curriculum or innovative educational method and practice that can raise the bar for all schools.
- 4) Magnet schools give public school parents more choice in their child's education experience by attracting students from outside an assigned neighborhood attendance zone.

Objectives:

The Office of School Choice, in concert with the Area Superintendents and the principals and staffs of these schools, are committed to pursuing the following objectives in the growth and implementation of magnets across the district.

1) *Strengthen programs already in place*

There are currently 31 magnet programs in place for the 2006-2007 school year; 14 elementary schools, 4 atypical schools, 2 middle schools, and 13 secondary schools. While our middle, high, and atypical schools have long wait lists for specific specialized programs, some elementary programs need significant revision to their programs to ensure relevance and appeal for 21st century students and enhanced academic experiences for all who attend.

2) *Develop K-12 continuity throughout themes*

Magnet schools do not articulate within a neighborhood pattern. Families who show a commitment to a magnet theme are given top priority at articulation to continue in that magnet theme from elementary to middle to high school. Some of our themes, at this time, do not have continuity between levels and therefore are not as attractive to parents as they once were. A few of our magnet schools are examining K-8 configurations to address the continuity issue. As school communities make grade level decisions, the Office of School Choice will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the magnet program at the site, and will continue to focus on creating clear continuity across themes.

As part of the Magnet School Plan, the Office of School Choice will work to address the missing continuity levels in our most sought after programs. Based on survey results and continuity needs, themes that are under consideration for completion are Athletics/Health; Business/Leadership; Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM); and International Studies/International Baccalaureate.

3) *Offer high quality appealing and sustainable programs*

Diversity in our magnet programs continues to be sought after, but our primary goal today is to offer a distinctive curriculum while implementing a rigorous academic program leading to higher student achievement for all students at the school. The Magnet Program Interest Survey listed twelve elementary and eleven secondary common magnet school themes found nationwide for parents to prioritize (see attachment 1). Results indicated that parents at the elementary level were most interested in Athletics & Health (42.8%), followed closely by Visual and Performing Arts (42.4%), Montessori (39.8%), Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (37.5%), and Language Enrichment (29.3%), Immersion (26.3%) with Spanish, French, Mandarin Chinese, and Japanese as the top four language choices. At the middle and high school levels, parents across the district tended to consistently prioritize a few themes. At the middle school level, families indicated across all six areas an interest in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) (51.7%), followed by Athletics (38.5%), Visual & Performing Arts (37.8%), Communications (27.5%), Language Enrichment (27.1%), Immersion (24.5%), and Digital Media & Design (24.2%). The high school data indicated the majority of parents were again interested in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (61.0%), followed by Athletics (36.6%), Digital Media and Design (33.6%), International Baccalaureate (33.0%), and Visual & Performing Arts (32%).

Interested in what motivates parents to select a school, the Magnet Program Interest Survey (attachment 1, Table 5, Table 6A, and Table 6B) asked parents what attracted them most about the school that their child attended this year. Overall, families attending their neighborhood school chose a school's academic reputation (25.7%), followed by

positive school climate (13.3%), strong parental involvement (10.2%), and unique program (8.9%). Families not attending their neighborhood school chose academic reputation (42.4), followed by positive school climate (26.7%) and unique program (26.0%), and strong parental involvement (12.5%).

Once again, as we develop our magnet program plan, the preferences of our families are being weighed heavily in consideration for continuing current magnet programs and developing new rigorous magnet programs.

4) *Sustain quality leadership by the selection and development of quality staff*

The Office of School Choice in conjunction with Human Resources and Labor Relations will continue to provide our magnet schools counsel in the teacher and staff selection process. Specialized professional development in some of our programs requires staff to make commitments to the magnet program offered at the site. Our current SDEA contract has two policy sections that relate to magnet programs.

Section 12.14: Initial staffing of magnet schools. This section states that if a school is changing or adopting a magnet focus, teachers may elect to remain at the magnet site, which assumes acceptance of the magnet focus or request to transfer to another school in the district. The criteria for the position should clearly state the requirements so teachers from the conversion site understand what they will be expected to do.

Under Exception to Post and Bid Procedures: Section 12.3.1: Integration Programs. For staffing of all integration program positions (except for initial staffing of magnet schools), the District will select the unit member to fill the vacancy from all qualified applicants.

The Office of School Choice will also work in conjunction with Area Superintendents to assist as needed in the selection of school leadership. A key role of the magnet school principal is to have a passion for the program. Principals engage the school community, involve local businesses, and ensure that the program is not in name only.

5) *Provide access to programs while distributing enrollment throughout the district*

Magnet school programs are currently located in four of the five K-8 district areas. Beginning with the 2007/08 school year, all five K-8 areas will have one or more magnet programs. In order to ensure the equitable distribution of enrollment to programs across the district, specific magnet policies include that applications to magnet schools are first sorted by Enrollment Options priorities and, then, additionally sorted by high school cluster. Examination of the high school clusters occurs every three years for accuracy in supporting our magnet programs. The current clusters are:

- Cluster 1 – Henry, La Jolla, Point Loma, Scripps Ranch
- Cluster 2 – Clairemont, Kearny, Madison, Mira Mesa, Mission Bay, Serra, University City
- Cluster 3 – Crawford, Lincoln, Hoover, Morse, San Diego

6) *Develop a marketing plan while cultivating community resources*

Parent access to information is the most critical variable in achieving diversity in and across magnet schools.¹ Every district family receives an Enrollment Options Catalog that describes all district school options, extensive information about magnet programs, and an application form to mail or fax. Parents also have the option of applying online in English and soon the same service will be available in Spanish. The catalog and application are also available to read and download on the district web site in English, Spanish, Tagalog, Somali, and Vietnamese. Many elementary magnet schools host articulation fairs to middle schools, and middle schools host high schools. School tours, presentations to local childcare centers, and parent teas are all part of our current recruitment effort. It is difficult for schools to give time to staff members to market their program, but the most successful magnet programs do just that. Programs that are refocusing need to recruit and must spend part of their magnet program funds to promote their program. Magnet funds will support the development of recruitment materials including print and/or DVD brochures highlighting their programs.

Plan to Achieve Goals and Objectives:

In order to achieve the six goals outlined above, we will utilize the following strategies.

1) *Strengthen programs already in place*

To strengthen our current magnet programs, the Office of School Choice sent out a short questionnaire to each of the 14 elementary magnet programs. Enrollment data, Enrollment Options wait lists, and academic achievement were also studied. Results indicated that a few of the district's magnet schools' programs need to include a more 'magnetizing' or more relevant program to parents and students and develop strategies or methodologies to incorporate the theme into core curricular areas. This is currently being discussed with the Area Superintendents and the schools. Next steps for the Office of School Choice, Magnet Programs, will be twofold: (1) Work with current magnets to enhance teaching and learning through a more relevant magnet program. (2) Develop an annual self-evaluation survey that will assist magnet schools in continually improving their magnet program.

2) *Develop continuity throughout themes*

The district office, acknowledging the support from the Board for the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme, will complete the sequence with the addition of ~~two~~ one IB schools, Birney Elementary.

Creative, Performing and Media Arts middle school physical plant and implications to SCPA middle and high school programs are currently being studied and a plan developed by Area 1 Superintendent, Carol Barry, the Instructional Facilities Planning Department and the Office of School Choice. A more detailed outline of this plan will be presented at a later date.

¹ U. S. Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement, *Innovations in Education: Creating Successful Magnet Schools Programs*, Washington D.C., 2004.

The following chart illustrates the planned magnet school programs. Schools and themes highlighted in **bold** indicate changes to the magnet program, bold parentheses indicate year of implementation.

Magnet Program Continuum

Magnet Theme	Elementary	Middle	Senior High
Athletics, Fitness & Health	Green (K-5)	New Health & Fitness program (2010)	
Bilingual Studies & Multicultural Communications	Spreckels (Spanish Enrichment) (K-5)		School of International Studies, SDC (9-12) School of Business, SDC (9-12) School of International Business, KC (9-12) School of Communication Investigations in a Multicultural Atmosphere (CIMA), SDC (9-12)
	Fulton Filipino and Spanish Enrichment (K-8)		
Business, Community Service, Leadership & MicroSociety	Joyner (K-5) (2007)	New Business & Leadership program (2010)	School of International Business, KC (9-12) School of Business, SDC (9-12) LEADS High School, SDC (9-12)
Communications & Writing	Benchley-Weinberger (K-5) Lindbergh Schweitzer (K-6)	Roosevelt (6-8)	All San Diego High Ed. Complex Schools (9-12)
Creative & Performing Arts	Crown Point (K-5) Freese (K-5) Oak Park (K-5) Valencia Park (K-5) Zamorano (K-5)	Creative, Performing, and Media Arts (CPMA) (6-8) San Diego SCPA (6-8)	San Diego SCPA (9-12) School of Digital Media & Design, KC (9-12) School of the Arts, SDC (9-12)
Global Citizenship Global Studies	John Muir (K-5)	John Muir (6-8)	John Muir (9-12) Mission Bay (9-12)
International Studies & International Baccalaureate	Birney (K-5) (2007)	Roosevelt (6-8)	Mission Bay (9-12) School of International Studies, SDC (9-12)
Language Immersion	Language Academy (French/Span.) (K-8) Longfellow (Spanish) (K-8) Sherman Spanish Dual Language Immersion (K-8)		School of International Studies, SDC (9-12)
Language Enrichment	Barnard Mandarin Chinese Language Program) (K-5) (2007)	New Mandarin Chinese 6-8 program (2010)	School of Business, SDC (9-12)
	Spreckels (Spanish Enrichment) (K-5)		
	Fulton Filipino and Spanish Enrichment (K-8)		
Montessori	Pre-K through 5 at North Park?		
K-8 Preparatory	Knox (K-6) (2007)	Knox (6-8)	
Communication through Digital Media Technology	Chollas-Mead (K-6)		
Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM)	Grant (K-8) Johnson (K-6) (2007) Webster (K-6)	San Diego Millennial Tech Middle School (6-8) (2007)	The Stanley E. Foster Construction Tech Academy, KC (9-12) School of Science, Connections & Technology, KC (9-12) School of Science & Technology (SciTech),

Offer high quality appealing and sustainable programs

Ongoing review of our magnet school programs will assist in assuring that schools are not magnets in name only, offer academic rigor, and have family appeal. A magnet program activity plan will be developed by each school and submitted in late October of each year. The plan will include identifying and building on program strengths, planning and implementing teacher requested magnet-related professional development, and identifying strategies to address program weaknesses.

A 'Magnet Programs Marketing Survey' is currently being drafted for magnet school use. The parent will complete the short, seven question survey when registering for school. The questions ask what school and program they are enrolling in, how the parent learned about the magnet program and why they chose to apply to the school. This information will assist us in providing continuous magnet program improvement.

3) *Sustain quality leadership by the selection and development of quality staff*

Given the highly specialized curriculum and the integration of that curriculum into core subject areas, teachers often need professional development in the theme. Professional development will be driven by the school's goals and theme, and their staff needs. More experienced teachers on the staff will mentor new teachers. Some magnets are utilizing methodologies that require explicit learning experiences for the staff such as International Baccalaureate, Paideia, MicroSociety, and language immersion. The district office will assist in setting up needed professional development and, whenever possible, will try to maximize opportunities to group teachers and schools or bring trainers to San Diego to lessen the cost. A committee of magnet teachers, principals and curriculum leaders will assist in designing the staff development needs of the district's magnet community. All of our K-12 visual and performing arts magnet school programs currently meet three times a year to map their program curriculum in order to build greater articulation and rigor. As we build our foreign language, STEM, International Baccalaureate, and other continuity themes from Kindergarten through grade twelve, we will implement professional development that maps the curriculum and studies best practices within the theme across schools. Advocacy by Labor Relations will be sought for our magnet school programs' success in hiring teachers interested in the magnet program offered at each school site.

4) *Provide access to programs while distributing enrollment throughout the district*

Magnet Schools were originally designed to have integration as an explicit purpose in response to our original court order. Today, we no longer use race as criteria for admission, but we strive to meet diversity goals nonetheless. Magnet programs are expected to be the powerhouses for learning, incubating innovative educational methods and practices that can raise the bar and serve as models for all schools. By doing so, the school attracts students from outside an assigned neighborhood attendance zone, giving all students across the district the opportunity to participate in the program. Magnet Programs can also assist in decreasing the chances of schools closing due to low enrollment. Specific schools identified by Board members included Cadman, Barnard, Rolando Park and Toler, but asked that the district concentrate on Barnard at this time. Therefore, a future magnet school program, in an area of town without magnet programs, will be studied under the direction of the Area 1 Superintendent and the Office of School

Choice Magnet Programs. Barnard Elementary is currently being considered for the location of the Mandarin Chinese Language Program.

5) *Develop a marketing plan while cultivating community resources*

More marketing and recruitment is necessary. In our declining enrollment and competition with private schools and charter schools, being able to effectively communicate the benefits of our programs is crucial. As part of that effort, funds are being requested for a marketing specialist who can effectively communicate information to our communities and parents through the Magnet Schools Assistance Program grant. Four major marketing efforts are being examined.

(A) Provide families just-in-time access to school programs via the web. Up-to-date magnet program websites with downloadable videos and easy access to teacher information pages, including state standards being addressed through planned inquiry activities, student assignments, homework, grades, and academic information are a necessity in our 21st century magnet school.

(B) Each school must ‘scream the theme’ to all San Diego communities via newspaper articles and advertisements in the family section of the Union Tribune and local community papers. Schools will also contribute to community forums, participate in local and national competitions, and work toward high NCLB academic scores and rankings. Each school will be responsible for following a marketing plan that includes specific goals, tasks, dates and responsibilities.

(C) Offer more print and electronic advertising and district-initiated marketing efforts from the Office of School Choice (funded through the MSAP grant). These efforts will include: banners and posters reminding parents of priority deadlines and assisting parents in making appropriate choices for their children; develop web-based video segments explaining the application process and our magnet programs to parents; replay magnet video segments at Board meeting recesses; and the development of an eighth grade articulation program giving students an opportunity to consider our many high school options. Eighth grade students will have the opportunity to complete an interest inventory with their parent. Then, in partnership with the district’s high school leadership team district-wide open house activities will be offered before the end of the Enrollment Options priority application deadline.

(D) Develop in conjunction with the Partnership Office magnet program-based community partnerships. We will continue to encourage individual magnet school principals to forge community partnerships that provide support for their programs through internships, tutoring, advertising, and other services that will enhance the magnet program at the site. In addition, magnet schools can write their own grants and solicit community partnerships to help bring in more funding and materials.

To stay current with our parents’ choices and to check marketing efforts, we have developed a Magnet Programs Marketing Survey (attachment 3). This survey will be given to the parent at the time of student enrollment into the magnet school. The data, in conjunction with our Enrollment Options wait list data, will be kept and compiled for research and evaluation of our marketing effort and the magnet program.

Conclusion

The healthy competition in academic and thematic success raised by the San Diego private sector and charter community has forced our public magnet schools to take a close look at the programs offered and next steps for magnet school implementation. The Office of School Choice is examining each magnet school for theme and program relevancy and need, ability for students to attend across the district, and academic success. We have surveyed our parents and our elementary programs, and have compiled data to back our choices. With the limited resources given to the magnet programs, it is imperative to conclude this document is a living document that will continually improve what is offered to students, and will be adjusted should parent feedback or district focus change.