

Chapter 8

Interdistrict Magnet School and Program Themes

Introduction

By legislative mandate, interdistrict magnet schools and programs must offer a ‘special and high quality curriculum.’ This chapter includes vignettes describing each of the state’s 31 interdistrict magnet schools and magnet programs operating in 2002-03. Each description includes the school’s opening date, location, governance, enrollment, theme and/or pedagogical emphasis, and highlights practices and activities that make magnet schools and programs unique, and special awards and recognitions they have received.

Interdistrict Magnet Elementary Schools

In 2000-01, seven interdistrict magnet elementary schools were operating in Connecticut: Montessori, East Hartford/Glastonbury, Regional Multicultural, Six-to-Six, Benjamin Jepson, Maloney, and Wintergreen. Since then Rotella transitioned from a local public elementary school to an interdistrict magnet elementary school, two new interdistrict elementary magnet schools have opened, Davis 21st Century Elementary Magnet School and University of Hartford Multiple Intelligence Magnet School. In addition, one charter school, Breakthrough Academy, made the transition to become an interdistrict magnet school. Each school is described below.

Montessori Magnet School

Montessori Magnet School, which opened in 1990, is a kindergarten through grade six interdistrict magnet school located in Hartford and managed by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) regional educational services center (RESC). The school draws its population of about 265 students from more than 20 public school districts in the region.

Montessori Magnet School is now located in a beautiful new facility on the Learning Corridor Campus near Trinity College. The curriculum is based on the internationally acclaimed Montessori developmental model organizing students into multi-age classrooms for instruction. The school is organized into three multi-age levels: primary classrooms (ages 3-6), lower classrooms (ages 6-9) and an upper elementary classroom (ages 9-12). These multiage classrooms each have an Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) trained teacher and a classroom assistant. The school has established exit outcomes that primary students and lower elementary must meet in order to move to the next level.

In addition to the Montessori curriculum, the school provides art, music, physical education and a library media program in its extensive facilities. All elementary students also receive violin lessons and play in a strings program. The school facility's extensive courtyard area provides opportunities for outdoor learning.

East Hartford/Glastonbury Elementary Magnet School

East Hartford/Glastonbury Elementary Magnet School opened in 1992 and is a CREC-managed magnet school located in East Hartford, drawing about 260 kindergarten through grade six students annually from the two communities. The school provides a

high quality integrated program emphasizing science, technology, global studies, and anti-bias education. Students are immersed in an integrated, thematic curriculum utilizing language arts and mathematics as its foundation. They receive daily instruction in reading, writing/communicating, and mathematics. Art, music, physical education, and health are also components of the school's curriculum. Students in grades K – 6 learn the Japanese language and learn about Japanese culture.

Teacher specialists work with the classroom teachers to integrate science, technology, and global education into all subjects. In the area of science, students are consistently well represented in such programs as Connecticut Invention Convention and the Long Island Sound Research Program Symposium. Participation in these programs has increased annually and encourages “real-world” scientific problem solving, one of school's primary goals. As mathematics enrichment activities, students in second grade participate in the Continental Mathematics League while students in grades three through six participate in the Math Olympiad. East Hartford/Glastonbury Elementary Magnet School offers an after-school enrichment program, *Magnetic Attractions*, which provides 20 different classes to over 150 students.

East Hartford/Glastonbury's social skills curriculum model, based on the “Responsive Classroom” program, provides consistent standards for behavior and includes daily lessons where students discuss interpersonal relationships and practice appropriate social skills.

Because East Hartford/Glastonbury Elementary Magnet School's philosophy focuses on community involvement and integrated learning, the school has established learning partnerships which are vital to the quality, uniqueness, and excitement of its program.

The enthusiastic staff and active, supportive parents are two critical links in this learning partnership. The school's ties with UCONN, Pratt & Whitney, the Science Museum of Connecticut, the Connecticut Audubon Society, and the American School for the Deaf enhance its instructional program.

Throughout the school year East Hartford/Glastonbury Elementary Magnet School offers a range of activities for parents and students. For example, during the 2001-02 school year activities included: Shin Nen Kai (Japanese New Year's celebration), Japanese school day celebration, Family Science Night, Family Math Night, Boat Regatta, Take-Apart Lab, and fifth grade Magnet School Fly-By (airplane ride over the school).

Regional Multicultural Magnet School

Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) is located in Waterford and opened in 1992. The RESC LEARN manages the school. The school recruits students from 11 public school districts in southeastern Connecticut and annually enrolls a student population of approximately 600 students in grades kindergarten through five. Students are assigned to classes so that all classes have a strong heterogeneous mix of students by race, ethnicity, gender, district, and age.

Regional Multicultural Magnet School features all-day kindergarten, Spanish Language instruction for all students, multiage classrooms, thematically integrated instruction, a multicultural environment and curriculum, and a two-way bilingual program. Bilingual services are provided to all students on an equitable basis. A summer program providing additional academic support is available to students. Students are

identified by teachers and invited to be part of the summer program so that the students with greatest need have the first opportunity to participate.

The spring of 2001 marked the tenth anniversary of the Regional Multicultural Magnet School. Persons who were involved with RMMS from the planning stages up through its current existence were honored at the recognition ceremony. Parents and families play an important role at the Regional Multicultural Magnet School. As part of the anniversary program, the school held a large Multicultural Festival to allow families from the entire area to come and be part of its multicultural experience.

In 2002, Magnet Schools of America, a national organization of intradistrict and interdistrict magnet schools, recognized Regional Multicultural Magnet School as a Magnet School of Merit for its outstanding program.

Six-to-Six Magnet School

Six-to-Six Magnet School opened in 1994 and is located in Bridgeport. Annually, the school enrolls about 400 students in grades pre-kindergarten through eight from five racially diverse communities. The school is a national demonstration site for Yale University's Bush Center for Child Development *Schools of the 21st Century* initiative and a CoZi (Comer-Zigler) school, emphasizing educating the whole child. The curriculum is learner-centered and developmentally appropriate. The school employs a 'Responsive Classroom' instructional model in which the school is a 'responsive community' of learners working to help its diverse population of students develop socially as well as academically in a nurturing environment. Educators and parents from around the world have visited Six-to-Six to observe the model in action.

Six-to-Six's curriculum has social studies at its core with emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Technology is integrated into curricular areas to enhance student learning. Working in conjunction with its management organization, the Cooperative Education Center (CES) RESC, the school's professional staff members are benefiting from a Gates' leadership grant award. The funding permits the school to create a professional development plan which supports teachers and curriculum development around technology.

The arts are an important component of the school's curriculum. The school developed a Cultural Arts Program, which brings artists-in-residence into the school for weeklong visits to work with classes of students to create permanent exhibitions of student work. The school also has an orchestra and band program with over 150 student-musicians participating.

Six-to-Six's middle school emphasizes citizenship and students participate in an extensive service learning program. To showcase their efforts, middle school students have been involved in the Families, Careers, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) national conference, presenting their service learning projects. In 2002, the students received three gold and three silver medals for the projects they submitted.

A particular unique aspect of Six-to-Six Magnet School's mission is its emphasis on meeting the needs of families. The school views itself as resource for families, recognizing children must have their families' support to become successful students. The school provides before and after-school care, pre-school for three and four year-old children, a staffed health center, and child care options during the summer and school vacations. In addition, it also has a Family Resource Center which directed its activities

toward family literacy during 2001-02, providing workshops and forums for parents on the topic.

Benjamin Jepson Non-Graded Elementary Magnet School

Benjamin Jepson Non-Graded Elementary Magnet School, which opened as an interdistrict magnet school in 1996, is a kindergarten through grade eight school located in New Haven and under the city's governance structure. Jepson draws a population of about 350 students from seven school districts.

Jepson is non-graded, so children work in flexible multi-age groups. The environment is multicultural and the curriculum provides students with opportunities to develop problem-solving skills and fosters creativity. A literature-based curriculum is used to teach reading. Teachers use a thematic approach to teach science and social studies and hands-on activities in teaching mathematics and science. The culminating activity for thematic units of study often include educational trips to locations such as historic Baltimore, the Bronx Zoo, Beardsley Zoo, Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty, and the Talcott Mountain Science Center. The pedagogical emphasis is child-centered, whereby teachers recognize and nurture each child's unique abilities and students are encouraged to work cooperatively.

Jepson provides a range of extracurricular activities to enhance positive student interactions. These include athletic activities, musical productions, cultural activities, and charitable activities. Parents are encouraged to participate in the school. Many parents from different ethnic backgrounds work as volunteers in classrooms, as well as assisting in school-wide activities. Students and parents interact with members of the community in order to inform them of the mission of the school.

Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School

Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School opened in 1996 and is located in Waterbury and under the city's governance. The school enrolls 525 students in grades pre-kindergarten through five from nine Naugatuck Valley communities. The school offers an integrated multicultural curriculum in a diverse, child-centered environment. Maloney provides full-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten, before and after-school programs, and a specialized program for hearing-impaired children.

The Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School mission emphasizes education for the whole child in conjunction with promoting multicultural understanding and interaction. Students are given the freedom to learn through exploration, experimentation, and discovery. Teachers approach classroom management and discipline through intrinsic motivation. Children develop responsibility and competence as critical thinkers and independent learners. To this end the school celebrates and validates students through programs such as Student of the Month, American Citizenship Program, Writers/Artist of the Week, and Student Council.

The pre-kindergarten through grade 5 multicultural curriculum is based on the premise that celebrating diversity, finding common themes, and valuing the traditions of many cultures broadens the perspectives of all. The curriculum brings students' heritages and world area studies into all subject areas. Several programs support multicultural interaction through instruction and participation in both regular and bilingual classes. For example, students have been involved in interactive group experiences as they studied topics such as Native American culture and the environment. Students in pre-

kindergarten through fifth grade also participate in a Japanese-as-a-Second-Language program, where language and culture are studied through interactive experiences.

Maloney Magnet School was recognized as a Magnet School of Merit by the Magnet Schools of America for the 2000-2001 school year. Criteria for selection was based on academic excellence, equity, and diversity.

Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School

Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School is a kindergarten through grade eight school located in Hamden, which opened in 1998. The school draws its diverse population of about 600 students from four communities. This allows students to interact on a daily basis with students from different ethnic, racial, economic, and community backgrounds. Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School is the first cooperative effort among a RESC, (Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES)), the Edison Project, and local education agencies to form a magnet school which addresses the needs of a diverse population.

Students in the Wintergreen Interdistrict Magnet School come from a variety of schools, with a variety of abilities. It is the goal of school to develop students who make excellent progress in meeting and exceeding high academic standards. One feature of the school is its schedule which provides more instructional time for students than most traditional elementary schools; Wintergreen has a longer school day (7.5 hours) and longer school year (199 days).

Wintergreen offers a curriculum and instructional program developed by Edison Schools, Inc. The curriculum includes language arts, social studies, mathematics and science for all students in grades K through 8. Parts of the curriculum are specifically prescribed ('Chicago Math' and 'Success for All'). Curriculum specialists support

teachers and administrators in the school to facilitate the on-going improvement of teaching and learning.

The school's academic and unified arts curriculum promote a multicultural approach to education. Students regularly produce integrated projects, performances and products which draw upon the diversity of the world in which they live. Wintergreen provides instrumental music lessons and a variety of extracurricular activities, with increasing numbers of students participating in these activities in recent years.

Students in Wintergreen Magnet School participate in interdistrict programs. One recent example is *Sister Schools*, "A Passion for Justice: Taking a Stand" which emphasized the interaction of students from a variety of communities around a production of "The Prudence Crandall Story." Such activities foster a regular, systematic approach to reducing racial, ethnic and economic isolation among the student population.

Rotella Interdistrict Magnet School

Rotella Interdistrict Magnet School opened in a new facility as an interdistrict magnet school in 2001 and is located in Waterbury and governed by the city's board of education. The school draws students in grades pre-kindergarten through five from ten surrounding communities. The school offers an integrated arts program, where the arts are infused throughout the curriculum. The program is structured in teams; each student's individual abilities across a range of multiple intelligences are recognized and nurtured. Rotella promotes a social structure of equality and cultural pluralism, in which students' cultural diversity is addressed within the context of learning and the curriculum.

Special aspects of the school's programs include pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten, and a daily breakfast program. Artists-in-Residence work with teachers to

assist them in preparing student-oriented lessons and materials. Technology is integral to learning at Rotella, as well. Teachers and students can take advantage of interactive multimedia and computer technology to enhance teaching and learning. The school also offers an after school enrichment program which emphasizes the fine arts and offers students courses in art, music, and theater arts. The school's 'Student of the Month' program recognizes and celebrates student achievement, peer relationships and citizenship. Applied behavioral analysis provides a foundation for the school's special education program. In addition, remediation and intervention programs have been implemented to assist those students with special needs.

Parent and community involvement are important aspects of Rotella's program. The school reflects a family-oriented atmosphere and prides itself on its success in making parents feel wanted and needed in order to provide a sound educational environment for its students. All parents are encouraged to participate, volunteer, share and "celebrate" their children's education. Parents enthusiastically contribute their time to the school because they feel welcomed and acknowledge the benefit to their children. Some participate on a daily basis in classrooms and throughout the school. Many of the school's programs include parent and/or community participation. The school production of the "Wizard of Oz" in September, 2001, included parents and community members in many performance and support roles.

The Rotella staff has taken advantage of opportunities to showcase its new facility and program. During the 2001-02 school year, Rotella hosted a dinner for the Connecticut Chapter of the National Association for Multicultural Education, presented a workshop on integrating the arts across the curriculum at the National Magnet Schools of

America Annual Meeting, and was presented an “Exemplary School Award” by the Connecticut Association of Schools for its integrated arts curriculum.

Davis 21st Century Elementary Magnet School

The Davis 21st Century Elementary Magnet School opened in fall, 2001 and in its second year enrolls 225 students in pre-kindergarten through grade five. The school is located in and governed by New Haven and can draw students from twenty demographically diverse communities in southern and central Connecticut. Davis offers an academically integrated curriculum with a thematic focus. Instruction is child-centered and parental involvement in the school is encouraged.

University of Hartford Multiple Intelligence Magnet School

In the fall of 2001, the University of Hartford Multiple Intelligence Magnet School opened in a state-of-the-art facility adjacent to the University of Hartford campus in Hartford, and is managed by CREC. During its second year the school enrolls approximately 350 pre-kindergarten through grade four students from seven demographically diverse communities in the greater Hartford region. The school’s curriculum and instructional program are grounded in Dr. Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory, recognizing eight distinct types of intelligence that play significant roles in how children learn. The various intelligences provide pathways for teachers to develop varied modes of instruction through which students can learn.

Breakthrough Academy

Breakthrough Academy, located in Hartford, is in its first year as an interdistrict magnet school, making the transition from a local charter school to a magnet school, and is governed by the Hartford Board of Education. The school enrolls approximately 200

students in pre-kindergarten through grade eight. Breakthrough Academy has a comprehensive academic curriculum and focuses on ‘Character Education’ and creating a supportive, school community with high expectations for social and academic development.

Interdistrict Magnet Middle and High Schools

In 2000-01, two magnet middle schools, Metropolitan Learning Center and Betsy Ross Arts Middle School, were in full operation in Connecticut, and since then four magnet middle schools opened, Thomas Edison Middle School, Sheridan Communications and Technology Magnet School, Hartford Middle Magnet School, and Two Rivers Middle Magnet School. In 2000-01, one magnet middle/high school, Collaborative Alternative High School, and five high schools, High School in the Community, Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School, Hill Regional Career High School, Hyde Leadership School, and Tunxis Middle College High School were in operation. Connecticut has since added two high schools to its interdistrict magnet secondary school choice options. The state opened one new interdistrict magnet high school, Great Path Academy at Manchester Community College, while one charter high school, Sports Sciences Academy, made the transition to become an interdistrict magnet high school.

Metropolitan Learning Center

Metropolitan Learning Center is a CREC- managed interdistrict magnet school which opened in 1998. It is located in Bloomfield and enrolls approximately 400 students in grades six through ten from six racially and ethnically diverse communities. The

school's new state-of-the art facility is designed to support its international global studies curriculum, also emphasizing world languages and technology.

Brain-based research provides a foundation for the school's instructional program, from the mechanical aspects of organizing the school day to planning lessons. Students' academic progress is systematically assessed using performance-based assessments across the curriculum. The school has established collective expectations for students' behavior, as well as academic performance.

Because of its international and global focus, the school has established partnerships, which are central to the uniqueness of its program, with Yale University, local businesses, and international corporations. The partnerships allow teachers to expand learning opportunities beyond the school's boundaries into the community, including activities such as job shadowing, internships, travel, and foreign study.

In 2002, Magnet Schools of America recognized Metropolitan Learning Center as a Magnet School of Merit for its unique and effective program.

Betsy Ross Arts Middle Magnet School

Betsy Ross Arts Middle Magnet School, which opened in 1999, is located in and managed by New Haven and enrolls approximately 390 students from grades five through eight from 18 southern and central Connecticut communities. Using the skills artists employ in examining the world in which we live, underlies the school's philosophy in preparing students to understand academic disciplines they study. Students are taught to use creativity to observe their world, analyze their observations, solve problems, and express themselves.

The arts are integrated across the curriculum, which includes instruction in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science, and world languages. Practicing artists, who provide instruction in the visual arts, theater, dance, music, creative writing, and photography, are a unique aspect of the Betsy Ross Arts Middle School program. Students are initially exposed to a range of these art forms, and then pursue an in-depth study of one of the art forms with either a practicing artist or academic teacher from the school.

Thomas Edison Magnet Middle School

The Thomas Edison Magnet Middle School opened in fall, 2001, is ACES-managed and located in Meriden. The school enrolls 770 students in grades six through eight from four central Connecticut public school districts. Thomas Edison provides a comprehensive middle school program integrating science, mathematics, and technology throughout the study of other academic disciplines. The inquiry-based learning model, traditionally used in science instruction, is applied to other disciplines such as the humanities to actively engage middle grade students in their own learning.

Sheridan Communications and Technology Magnet School

Sheridan Communications and Technology Magnet School opened in the fall of 2001. The school is located in, and under the governance of New Haven, and is designed for middle grade students. Sheridan enrolls about 225 students drawing students from 20 greater New Haven communities. Sheridan provides a challenging academic middle school curriculum in a new state-of-the-art facility with a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters students' academic and social development. Technology is integrated across the curriculum. Students explore thematic units of study within a

flexible daily schedule. The school facility includes telecommunication and applied science laboratories to foster exploration and provide hands-on experiences. Sheridan has forged community, university, and corporate partnerships to support and enhance students' classroom experiences.

Hartford Middle Magnet School

Hartford Middle Magnet School is under the governance of the Hartford Board of Education and is located in a new facility on the Learning Corridor Campus which opened as an interdistrict magnet school at the beginning of the 2002-03 school year. The school enrolls 575 students from 20 greater Hartford communities. The school offers a comprehensive, rigorous curriculum emphasizing science, technology, and the arts. The facility, which includes state-of-the-art mathematics and science laboratories as well as a fitness center and swimming pool, supports the school's mission and instructional theme. Its location fosters partnerships with the Greater Hartford Academy of Arts, the Greater Hartford Academy of Math and Science, and Trinity College, along with the Bushnell Memorial, to enrich students' academic and cultural experiences.

Two Rivers Middle Magnet School

Two Rivers Middle Magnet School is CREC-managed and opened in East Hartford in the fall of 2002 with 425 grade six through eight students from five surrounding communities. The school offers a comprehensive and rigorous middle school program with a science and technology theme. Because of its location on the Connecticut and Hockanum Rivers, it provides students with a unique 'living laboratory' for on-going experiments in the areas of earth science, biology, and physics, and hands-on science research. Its new, state-of-the-art facility provides students with opportunities to work

with the latest instructional technologies. Two Rivers has established partnerships with the Connecticut Science Center, Riverfront Recapture, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency to provide students with rich experiences complementing their classroom activities.

Collaborative Alternative High School

Collaborative Alternative High School is an ACES-managed interdistrict magnet middle/high school which opened in 2000 and is located in Northford. The school enrolls approximately 100 students annually, recently expanding from a grade nine through twelve high school to add grades seven and eight. Students from five southern and central communities are eligible to attend.

The school provides an alternative environment for middle and high school students who have not been successful in traditional public schools. Collaborative Alternative focuses on improving students' academic performance and self-esteem, and celebrating the diversity of its students. Class size is small compared with other public middle and high schools, and teachers build upon students' strengths using a thematically based curriculum and instruction emphasizing projects and active-learning. The environment is supportive; adults in the school collaborate with students on challenging academic work.

High School in the Community

High School in the Community is the interdistrict magnet high school with the longest history in New Haven, opening in 1995, and under the city board of education's management. It is a grade nine through twelve school drawing 350 students annually from 13 public school districts in south/central Connecticut. The school is teacher-administered, offering a comprehensive college-preparatory instructional program.

Team-teaching, interdisciplinary courses, experiential learning and community involvement are key characteristics of the school's program. The school day is organized using block scheduling to provide students with two and three-hour periods of time to immerse themselves in learning activities focused on problem-solving and developing individual responsibility.

Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School

Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School opened in 1996, is located in and governed by New Haven, and enrolls 375 students. The diverse population of students is drawn from 15 communities in the greater New Haven region. The school offers a comprehensive college preparatory program, complemented by an expansive arts program. Its mission is to prepare students for life-long learning, and purposeful participation in their own communities and the global society.

The school is unique in that it is the only full-day academic and arts high school in Connecticut. The school's arts offerings include visual arts, theater, dance, music, and creative writing. Interdisciplinary projects strengthen the interrelationship between the school's academic and artistic curricular components, with a range of advanced placement courses in both the academic disciplines and the arts.

Cooperative Arts and Humanities capitalizes on the rich resources within the community and has established relationships with Yale University, Southern Connecticut State University, Gateway Community College, local artists' organizations, and community organizations to enrich students' experiences within the school. Co-curricular activities, musical and theatrical productions, and student awards in both academic and artistic disciplines showcase the strength of the school's integrated

academic and arts program. Outside of the school, student leadership and leadership-training activities in 2001-02 ranged from “A Day on the Hill,” examining legislative priorities, to the local Rotary club’s “Global Young Leaders Conference,” while community service activities supported the needs of local shelters and relief for World Trade Center disaster.

Hill Regional Career High School

Hill Regional Career High School opened in 1997, is located in and governed by New Haven, and draws about 680 students annually from 16 surrounding communities. The school offers a comprehensive high school curriculum for grade nine through twelve students to prepare them either to enter professions in the business/computer or allied health/science fields directly after high school or to continue into post-secondary education. The program incorporates academic preparation with career exploration opportunities.

Partnerships with universities such as Yale University’s School of Medicine, Yale-New Haven Hospital, and Southern Connecticut State University’s Nursing Program as well as local corporations, are central to Hill Career High School’s program by providing students with authentic professional experiences. The teaching staff prepares students to pursue post-secondary education and use professional skills they have acquired to make positive contributions to society.

Hyde Leadership School

The Hyde Leadership School opened in 1998 and is located in Hamden, but under New Haven Board of Education governance. Annually, the school draws about 200 grade nine through twelve students from 11 greater New Haven communities. The

school's philosophy is based on the five principles of 'Character First:' potential, destiny, conscience, truth, and brother's keeper. The principles permeate all facets of the school's academic, athletic, artistic, community service, and career preparation programs. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students are committed to the precept that all students can achieve personal excellence and fulfillment.

Tunxis Middle College High School

Tunxis Middle College High School opened in 2000 as a CREC-managed interdistrict magnet school located in Farmington on the campus of Tunxis Community College. The school serves 80 grade ten through twelve students annually from five diverse central Connecticut communities and offers an integrated college-preparatory academic program challenging students who were not able to realize their potential in more traditional public high school settings. The 'middle college high school' model is the foundation of the school's curriculum, which employs an experiential instructional approach, combining secondary and post-secondary (in which students earn college credit) coursework along with intensive career exploration, internships, and postsecondary school and/or job placement after graduation. Small classes, a highly personalized environment with open communication between teachers and students, and teachers and parents, a culture emphasizing responsible citizenship, and active school-community contributions characterize the school. On a daily basis all students participate in community service or internship activities, where they develop job-related skills and explore career options, as well as learn the importance of being part of and contributing their to community.

Great Path Academy at Manchester Community College

Great Path Academy at Manchester Community College, a CREC-managed interdistrict magnet school, opened in fall 2002 in Manchester on the campus of Manchester Community College, and enrolls 30 eleventh grade students from seven demographically diverse communities in the greater Hartford region. The Academy is a member of the Middle College High School National Consortium and is an example of a growing national trend to establish high schools on community college campuses. Its mission is to assist students from diverse backgrounds to become successful independent learners. The partnership between high school and community college permits students to complete the course work required for a high school diploma, while simultaneously earning credits that can later be applied toward a college degree. From a pedagogical perspective, the school draws its practices from the best used in traditional and alternative high schools, as well as higher education. Because of the Academy's small size, the faculty and staff can provide students the individual attention they need to develop the academic skills and personal skills and qualities to succeed.

Sports Sciences Academy

Sports Sciences Academy is located in Hartford and operates under the governance of the Hartford Board of Education. The Academy is currently (2002-03) in its first year as an interdistrict magnet school, making the transition from a local charter school to a magnet school. It had operated as a local charter high school for the past five years. The Academy offers a comprehensive college preparatory program with emphasis on preparing students to pursue post-high school education in the science or medical fields. The program features a service learning component, which is designed to help students

understand their strengths, talents, and potential as contributing members of their community. The school also offers a range of extra-curricular activities to promote students' social integration within the school community.

Half-day Interdistrict Magnet Programs and School-within-a-School Programs

In the fall of 2000, nearly 900 Connecticut public school students had the opportunity to complement the curriculum in their local public high school by attending specialized interdistrict magnet programs. Four half-day magnet programs are located in their own facilities: Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts, ACES Educational Center for the Arts, Regional Center for the Arts, and Greater Hartford Academy of Mathematics and Science. Students typically attend their local high school for the first half of the school day and the magnet program for the second half of the school day. Two school-within-school programs are located within local public high schools: the Connecticut International Baccalaureate Academy and the Center for Japanese Study Abroad. No new interdistrict magnet programs have opened in Connecticut since 2000.

Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts

The Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts is a CREC-managed interdistrict magnet program housed in a new facility located at the Learning Corridor adjacent to Trinity College in Hartford. The Academy is the oldest of the half-day interdistrict magnet programs, operating since 1989. The Academy provides basic and advanced study to about 325 high school students, annually drawn from more than 40 demographically diverse communities throughout Connecticut. The Academy offers music, theater, dance,

visual arts, film and television, theater production and design, and creative writing, and has recently added musical theater emphasis.

Bringing together students who share a common interest in the arts in small classes working with professional artists and teachers, the Academy has multiple goals. These include developing the talent of high school students in their chosen artistic fields along with their self-confidence and self-esteem, enhancing students understanding of and appreciation for cultural diversity, fostering flexible ways of thinking and imagination, and exposing students to professional artists. The Academy provides a nurturing environment where students are encouraged to take risks and learn from their mistakes, and where non-traditional learners excel. The school community is characterized by students who have a strong interest in studying the arts, professionals who are excited about their work, and parents and the community who support the program.

The Academy produces a variety of shows during the course of the year to highlight students' talents in each of the artistic areas. The Academy's students have performed and exhibited throughout Connecticut and New England, and received awards and scholarships in recognition of their artistic achievements. On average 92 percent of the Academy students attend college after graduation, with nearly two-thirds of those students entering arts programs.

ACES Educational Center for the Arts

The Educational Center for the Arts, located in New Haven, is ACES-managed and opened in 1993. It draws about 270 students annually from 20 southern and central Connecticut communities. The Center offers a half-day arts curriculum with instruction in dance, instrumental and vocal music, theater, the visual arts, and prose and poetry.

The goal of the program is to develop students' individual talents. To achieve the goal, students work as artists with professional artists and teachers in their courses and on projects, developing technical and critical thinking skills, as well as expanding their imagination and creativity.

Regional Center for the Arts

The Regional Center for the Arts, which opened in 1996, is a half-day performing arts magnet program located in Bridgeport and managed by CES. The Center attracts nearly 225 ninth through twelfth grade students annually from six southwestern Connecticut communities. The Center's student body reflects the racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity of the greater Bridgeport region and fosters opportunities to share cultures and traditions. Its performing arts training program in the areas of dance, theater, musical theater, film and video production, and creative script-writing prepares students to pursue professional careers and post-secondary studies in their specialty. The Center offers small classes and a highly structured and academically rigorous curriculum, which is directed at developing the professional artist and each student's self-image, in a supportive and nurturing environment.

Greater Hartford Academy of Mathematics and Science

Greater Hartford Academy of Mathematics and Science opened in 2000 as a CREC-managed interdistrict magnet program, housed in a state-of-the-art facility located at the Learning Corridor adjacent to Trinity College in Hartford. The program draws about 200 students in grades nine through twelve from 13 greater Hartford communities. The Academy's mission is to provide a solid academic foundation in mathematics, the sciences, and technology. The half-day program offers challenging honors and advanced

placement courses in those disciplines, in an academic community where students and teachers share a common interest. The Academy, which is a member of the National Consortium of Specialized Secondary Schools of Mathematics, Science, and Technology, takes advantage of the local higher education and community resources such as Trinity College, the University of Hartford, and Hartford Hospital, to enhance students' opportunities to apply their learning in an authentic manner.

Center for Japanese Study Abroad

The Center for Japanese Study Abroad is a school-within-a-school interdistrict magnet program housed in Brien McMahon High School in Norwalk and under the Norwalk Board of Education's governance. The program opened in 1995 and enrolls about 100 students, drawing from 15 communities in southwestern Connecticut. The mission of the program is to increase students' awareness of the Japanese culture through the study of language, literature, and history. The curriculum provides instruction in the Japanese language at the beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. Students study literature and history within an integrated, interdisciplinary context. They examine various genres of Japanese literature, produce their own essays, and explore the social, political, and economic aspects of the Japanese culture. The Center has established a sister-school in Japan. In the early spring, the Center hosts Japanese high school students from the sister-school who attend classes and stay with families of students who attend the Center. In the late spring, the Center's students travel to Japan for a two-week study tour in which they stay with host-families and attend classes in their sister school. As a culminating activity for the school year, each student conducts a research project and prepares a paper, often conducting field research while abroad. Out-of-district students

enrolling in the Center attend Brien McMahon High School's academic classes in order to fulfill their district's graduation requirements.

Connecticut International Baccalaureate Academy

Connecticut International Baccalaureate Academy is a school-within-a-school interdistrict magnet program which opened in 1999 in East Hartford High School, under the East Hartford Board of Education governance. The Academy attracts about 130 grade nine through twelve students from seven central and eastern Connecticut communities who are seeking an international alternative to traditional college preparatory curriculums. Its program is aligned with the course offerings, learning-expectations, and international standards for quality and excellence the *International Baccalaureate Organisation* has established. The Academy offers a rigorous academic curriculum in core disciplines such as mathematics, science, and world languages, with unique courses designed to help students develop an international perspective and understanding.

Summary

Connecticut's interdistrict magnet schools and magnet programs reflect as much organizational, thematic, and pedagogical diversity in the programs they offer as the students they enroll. They vary in the grade levels they span, the number of communities they service, the geographic radius from which they draw students, the length of time they have operated as interdistrict magnets, and the manner in which they are managed and governed. While technology, science, multicultural/global education, and the arts are

themes common to several, no two schools deliver their educational programs and services to students and their communities in an identical manner.

The interdistrict magnet schools and programs share common elements as well. These include a commitment to providing high quality, rigorous educational programs for the diverse student populations they serve, creating learning environments that support teaching and learning, and experimenting with the content and delivery of public school education in new and exciting ways.



Chapter 9

The Emergence and Development of Interdistrict Magnet Schools and Magnet Programs in Connecticut

Introduction

In 1989, the first interdistrict magnet program in Connecticut opened in Hartford: The Greater Hartford Academy for the Arts. During the decade of the 1990s, 17 interdistrict magnet schools and programs emerged throughout the state located in a total of nine different school districts. In the last three years the number of Connecticut interdistrict magnet schools and programs has increased by 13 to a total of 31, located in 14 public school districts. By fall 2002, over ten thousand students, or about two percent of the state's public school students, from nearly one-hundred of the state's public school districts, were attending its interdistrict magnet schools and magnet programs. The facilities of the currently operating magnet schools and programs have the capacity to enroll another four thousand students as the new magnets expand to their full range of grade levels.

This final chapter of the evaluation report summarizes the findings from each of the previous chapters and concludes with recommendations for improving the quality of Connecticut's interdistrict magnet schools and magnet programs.

Findings

Interdistrict Magnet Schools and Magnet Programs: Diverse Learning Communities

According to the legislation enabling the funding of interdistrict magnet schools and programs presented in Chapter 1, these public education institutions are charged with reducing racial, ethnic, and economic isolation, and offering special and high quality programs. The Chapter 2 data portray the state's interdistrict magnet schools and magnet programs as educational environments that have more diverse student and teacher populations than most students would have encountered had they attended their local public schools. Parents, teachers, and students agree across elementary, middle, and high schools, and magnet programs that the magnet schools are diverse learning communities, and that students from different backgrounds work together on school projects, socialize outside of school, and have made friends with classmates from different backgrounds. Teachers believe the individual classes within their schools mirror the diverse populations their schools enroll and that their schools provide academic opportunities for all students, regardless of their background.

Positive Trends in Magnet Elementary and Middle School Student Academic Achievement and Perceptions of Program Quality

The academic performance of magnet elementary and middle students was examined in Chapter 3, based on their performance on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT), for grades four, six, and eight. Magnet school participation in the Standard CMT exceeds statewide averages for all three grades, with 95 percent or more of each grade tested on the appropriate grade-level test. Although only two years of data are available for the current Third Generation CMT, the achievement trends are positive and promising. In elementary magnet schools, for which up to three grades of CMT data are available, the gap between magnet school and statewide percentages of students meeting goal in

mathematics, reading, and writing declines from grade four to grade eight as students have completed more years of their education in magnet schools. The percentage of middle magnet school sixth grade students meeting the state goal on each of the three CMT subtests is considerably lower than elementary magnet school or state-wide sixth grade averages. However, by grade eight, when students have been able to benefit from two years of education in their middle magnet schools, the gap has begun to decline.

Elementary teachers and parents agree that their magnet schools offer high quality academic programs and have high expectations for academic performance. Most parents report that their children find the magnet school program challenging, are enthusiastic about learning, and have improved academically. The challenging academic programs that magnet schools offer and the high quality professional staff the schools employ are the two primary reasons why parents select magnet elementary and middle schools for their children. Teachers believe that most magnet elementary and middle school students are making steady progress, but to a lesser degree that students have high expectations for their own performance and are motivated to learn. Most magnet elementary and middle grade students understand the academic expectations for learning in their schools, know that teachers expect them to do their best work, and believe their school work requires their best effort. Larger proportions of magnet elementary school students indicate they are satisfied with their academic progress than magnet middle school students.

Magnet High School Student Academic Performance: Low CAPT Scores and High Graduate Achievement Indicators

Chapter 4 examined the performance of magnet high school students, based on the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) in grade ten, and other measures the

CSDE collects annually about the performance of students who have graduated from the state's public high schools. While magnet high school students' participation rates for the Standard CAPT administrations consistently have exceeded statewide averages, relatively small percentages of magnet high school grade ten students have met the state goal on any of the four CAPT subtests. However, over the course of the last four years the proportion of magnet school students meeting goal has increased modestly, and at a faster rate than the statewide proportion.

By graduation interdistrict magnet school student achievement data are more promising. Smaller proportions of interdistrict magnet high school students, than students statewide, drop out of high school prior to graduation. During their high school careers larger proportions of magnet school graduates complete algebra I and chemistry, than graduates statewide, and enroll in advanced placement courses. The percentage of magnet graduates taking the SAT annually has been above the statewide average, while total SAT performance has been at or above the local and ERG I levels. After graduation, magnet school students enroll in two or four-year college programs in larger percentages than graduates statewide.

Most magnet high school and magnet program parents and teachers believe their schools offer high quality academic experiences for students, have high expectations for students' academic performance and parents report their children find the school challenging academically, are enthusiastic about learning, and have made academic progress. The level of agreement, however, is generally lower for magnet high school parents than other school groups of parents surveyed. Parents select magnet high schools and programs because of the quality of teachers and administrators, and the challenge of

the academic programs. While many teachers believe their students have high expectations for their own learning and are motivated to learn, and most students are making steady academic progress, the proportions of magnet high school teachers agreeing with the statements are considerably lower than those of teachers in other school groups. Grade 10 magnet high school and magnet program student survey responses indicate both groups recognize that teachers expect them to do their best work in class and that they know they must do their best work. In addition, many report the work they do requires their best effort and they are satisfied with the academic progress they are making, although agreement among magnet high school students is again lower than among students in the other three school groups.

Teachers' Perceptions: Interdistrict Magnet Schools Are Not Perfect, But Better Than Other Schools Where They Have Worked

Chapter 5 provided summaries of magnet school teachers' survey responses about perceptions of their schools and their job satisfaction. Magnet school teachers believe that the climate in their schools supports children as learners and teachers as professionals. Overall, they believe their schools provide safe environments, have set appropriate standards for proper student behavior, and students adhere to the established standards, for the most part. While generally teachers believe there is mutual respect between teachers and students; there is less agreement, except among magnet program teachers, that students display mutual respect among themselves. Teachers in all four school groups characterize their schools and programs as educational communities that promote innovation and foster collaboration among professional staff members on

curricular and instructional issues, where teachers use a variety of instructional and assessment strategies, and are accountable for student academic performance.

Magnet school and program teachers indicate that their principals are effective instructional leaders who encourage teachers to actively participate in instructional decisions, communicate openly with staff, and are available to discuss classroom and instructional issues. There is generally high agreement among interdistrict magnet school and magnet program teachers that teachers and administrators share a common mission, the mission is the foundation for the academic program, the curriculum incorporates the mission, and most professional development activities support the mission. Overall magnet school teachers agree that parents support the mission, although more consistently for elementary schools and magnet programs than for middle or high schools.

The majority of teachers agree that class sizes are sufficiently small so teachers can provide students the individual attention they need however agreement is not universal, particularly among high school teachers. Except for middle magnet school teachers, even lower proportions believe their school's support services for special needs students are adequate. Magnet school and program teachers report their facilities suit their school's program, textbooks and other instructional materials are current, adequate instructional materials are available, and technology is accessible to support their school's program.

Finally, most magnet school and program teachers are satisfied with their positions and the operation of the schools in which they work. More than half of the professionals in all the magnet schools and programs strongly agree they are satisfied with their

positions; this is considerably higher than national averages of less than one-third of all public school teachers who are highly satisfied with their work.

Parents' Perceptions: Interdistrict Magnet Schools and Programs Provide Safe and Secure Educational Environments with Adequate Resources to Support the Academic Programs

Chapter 6 presented survey results regarding parents' perceptions of the school and programs. Most parents agree that the magnet schools and programs their children attend are safe and secure learning environments, with appropriate behavior standards that students adhere to, for the most part. In addition, parents generally believe that there is mutual respect between teachers and students, and among students. Elementary magnet parents register more certainty about the climate of the schools their children attend than parents in other school groups. In general most parents across the four school groups believe their schools have sufficiently small classes so teachers can provide students with the individual attention they need, adequate services to support the school's academic program, and ample material resources including computers and technology. There was lesser agreement about the adequacy of before and after-school activities, particularly the availability of athletic and sports teams at the middle and high school levels.

As students progress through school levels, parents appear to have less first-hand knowledge about the schools their children attend. Moreover, their involvement in the schools also declines as students progress through higher school levels. Larger proportions of elementary parents meet with teachers, attend school activities, visit

classes, volunteer in their child's school, and help organize school activities, than parents of students in the other school groups. Elementary teachers and students perceive parents taking more active roles in their schools than teachers and students in the other school groups, although teachers across all of the school groups desire parents to become more involved and invested in their child's school.

Students' Perceptions: Not Completely Aligned with Their Teachers' and Parents' Perceptions

Chapter 7 compared the students' perceptions of various aspects of the schools and programs they attend. The survey responses found considerable differences across the school groups in students' perceptions of several aspects of their magnet schools and magnet programs, and between students' views and those of their parents and teachers within the same school group. Most magnet school and program students feel safe and secure in their schools, believe that students understand the school's behavior rules but to a lesser extent follow the established rules, and acknowledge there is mutual respect between teachers and students and among students. Magnet students also believe that, in general, teachers are interested in their academic performance and provide them with help during class and outside of class, if they need it. Also, many indicate they can find an adult in their school to help them resolve problems. Tenth grade students attending the half-day magnet programs had more positive perspectives of their school climate than students attending full-day magnet schools, with high school students providing the least positive responses. Parent and teacher perceptions of school climate were considerably more positive than student perceptions, across all school groups.

Magnet school missions and themes provide a focus for the education experiences students have in their schools and programs. For elementary and middle magnet schools and magnet programs, students clearly understand their school's theme and acknowledge that it is used in their classes; the integration of the theme is not as evident for the majority of tenth grade students in magnet high schools and magnet high school students' perceptions about the theme's integration into classroom instruction are not consistent with their teachers' perceptions.

Elementary and middle school students were more likely than high school and magnet program students to indicate they understand how they are assessed and that their teachers use a variety of means to assess their learning. The majority of magnet school and magnet program students complete homework on a daily basis, but smaller proportions believe that the homework they do actually helps them to learn at high levels. As students progress through higher grades, parents are less likely to assist them with their homework, and they are less apt to complete daily assignments.

Magnet school and program students provided mixed responses to statements about the availability and use of resources in their schools. Most students acknowledge that the texts and materials they use in their classes relate to what they learn, they use materials in addition to their textbooks to learn, and technology is available and used to enhance learning, particularly at the elementary and middle school levels. Elementary magnet school students were most satisfied with the variety of after-school activities their schools offered, while magnet high school students were least satisfied. Students' written responses identified a lack of athletic activities and sports teams as a concern for middle and high school students.

Interdistrict Magnet School and Magnet Program Missions and Themes: Unique and Varied Educational Opportunities and Experiences

Chapter 8 described the different interdistrict magnet schools and programs that are currently operating in Connecticut. These schools and programs share a commitment to provide high quality programs to the diverse student populations they draw from a geographic radius extending beyond the communities in which they are located. Each school and program continues to evolve, focusing on curricular and pedagogical innovation to create academic experiences that provide public school education in new and exciting ways. Technology, science, multicultural/global education, and the arts are themes common to several magnet schools and magnet programs, however, no two schools deliver their educational programs and services to students and their communities in an identical manner.

Closing Comments

The data presented throughout this report suggest that interdistrict magnet schools and magnet programs are making progress in achieving their legislative charges. Magnet schools and magnet programs provide their students with more racially, ethnically, and economically diverse educational environments than many students would have experienced had they stayed in their local school districts. Interdistrict magnet schools and programs offer unique high quality educational experiences, where academic performance improves as students progress through the grades in their schools. Moreover, given the high level of mobility of many students' families, interdistrict

magnet schools provide a stable educational environment for students because their school assignment does not depend upon the neighborhood in which they reside.

The most effective magnet schools and programs in Connecticut have several common characteristics. First, these schools have principals who are highly regarded as instructional leaders in their school community, and often have an additional administrator responsible for the managerial aspects of operating the school. Second, successful schools have a mission which incorporates a theme that is clearly integrated across the entire academic program, focused on improving student academic performance, and embraced by all constituents. The theme connects students with the school and with teachers who share a common interest. Third, administrators and teachers have access to student achievement data and use it to make instructional decisions. Teachers use multiple strategies to monitor and assess student learning. Fourth, parents are actively invested in their child's education and involved in their schools. Fifth, teachers, parents, and students have high expectations for student performance. Finally, all members of the school community believe they are accountable for improving student academic performance.

Yet the data also suggest that there is still work to be done to continue to improve the magnet schools and programs that currently operate in Connecticut. While the evaluation answered the questions outlined in the first chapter, it also uncovered additional questions that merit addressing at the school level:

1. Why are students' perceptions of the climates within their schools less positive than those of their teachers and parents, and what can schools do to enhance their climates so that all children feel safe, secure, and respected?

2. While many students are satisfied with the academic progress they are making, what can magnet schools do to insure that all students make the academic progress they desire?
3. How can magnet schools and programs increase parents' investment in their own child's education and involvement in the school, particularly beyond the elementary level?
4. While magnet high school graduates have posted solid academic accomplishments, what can magnet schools do during the school day and after school to increase the engagement of students during the first two years of their high school careers?

The answers to these questions will help the good schools and programs currently operating in Connecticut to become better at addressing the academic and social needs of the students they enroll.

Some more global issues which affect the magnet school movement in Connecticut need to be addressed as well:

1. Many of the currently operating interdistrict magnet schools and programs could serve as models that could be replicated in other locations throughout the state. Providing incentives to encourage districts and other governing agencies to replicate established, effective programs and practices, rather than initiating newly designed programs, would reduce school 'start-up' time and some of the instructional issues new interdistrict magnet schools and programs encounter.

2. The lack of 100 percent state funded transportation from some feeder districts to interdistrict magnet schools is a disincentive for some parents to enroll their children.
3. Regional plans for creating future magnet schools and programs need to be established to provide students with opportunities for a pre-kindergarten through grade 12 interdistrict magnet school education.
4. Redefining half-day magnet ‘programs’ as half-day magnet ‘schools’ would require them to complete all school-level state reports, such as those relevant to the Strategic School Profiles, which provide information to the state and public about their operation and adherence to state policies.

Addressing these issues will make magnet schools and programs more attractive to parents in urban and suburban districts across the state, as well as to districts that may be considering building new magnet schools or developing magnet programs.



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