

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Board of Education Presentation July 28, 2015



Magnet Study Visit: Findings and Recommendations

Overview

1. Essential Questions
2. Five Pillars of Magnet Schools
3. Methodology
4. Key Findings
5. Recommendations

Methodology

Magnet Schools of America's National Institute for Magnet School Leadership (NIMSL) developed a methodology for the study visit of magnet programs in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools that would provide a multi-faceted perspective on the current status of their programs, especially related to the three key questions:

Are CMS magnet schools promoting diversity?

Are CMS magnet schools promoting achievement?

Are CMS magnet schools “magnetic”?

Five Pillars of Effective Magnet Schools

Effective magnet programs are built around these **five pillars**:

1. Diversity
2. Innovative Curriculum and Professional Development
3. Academic Excellence
4. High Quality Instructional Systems
5. Family and Community Partnerships

Magnet Study Visit Methodology:

The methodology included six critical components:

- 1. Quantitative data analysis**
- 2. Survey analysis**
- 3. Site visits**
- 4. Community Focus Groups**
- 5. Interviews**
- 6. MSA's Cycle of Improvement Framework**

Statement of MSA Findings: Diversity

Are Magnet Schools Promoting Diversity?

Standard 1: Student Recruitment and Selection

Standard 2: Diversity and Equity

Standard 8: Magnet and District Relations

Statement of MSA Findings: Diversity

Standard 1: Student Recruitment and Selection

- The district primarily handles student recruitment and marketing, not the schools.
- No substantiated marketing plan for individual schools was consistently noted.
- Targeted recruitment was virtually non-existent for CMS magnet schools.
- There is evidence that the district uses a clear and transparent lottery system, but may not consistently provide access to all magnet programs through varied criteria such as entrance requirements.
- Transportation is available to only magnet schools within a student's transportation zone.

Statement of MSA Findings: Diversity

Standard 2: Diversity and Equity

- Students with special needs and English Language Learners (ELL) are under-represented and underserved by CMS magnet schools.
- There is limited evidence of diversity reflective of the district and community in the enrollment of most district's magnet schools.
- The district has developed a policy statement of student diversity, but there is no evidence of updates of enrollment success with integration and diversity.

Statement of MSA Findings: Diversity

Standard 8: Magnet and District Relations

- The operation of the zone/corridors, especially the Grey Corridor and the operational and student assessment barrier may be detrimental to the diversity goals of the district.
- The district has a strategic plan, but does not include magnet schools as a focus regarding their diversity goals.
- School choice is based on transportation boundaries which does not always allow equitable access to all students.

MSA Recommendations: Diversity

- CMS should clarify the purpose, mission, and goals of the magnet programs. The entire community should know the purpose of magnets; history of their inception, pillars, benefits.
- Each magnet school should annually implement a targeted recruitment and marketing plan consistently and with fidelity. Ensure there is a review and evaluation of the recruitment and marketing plan, and there are clear means for improvement of stated goals.
- Each magnet school should collect, review, and analyze clear and concise indicators for success annually related to its marketing and recruitment plan that results in the reduction of minority group isolation.

MSA Recommendations: Diversity

- Transportation should be accessible so that magnet schools are available to all students.
- CMS should build capacity with leadership to ensure all classes and programs in the magnet school are fully and consciously integrated to reflect the diversity of the district and community.
- A community task force should be created within CMS with various stakeholders to determine the purpose, goals, and types of magnet programs that will serve students in CMS.
- The Magnet Programs Office should set goals for the task force to develop a strategic plan, monitor the implementation, and serve in an advisory capacity during this process.

Statement of MSA Findings: Achievement

Are Magnet Schools Promoting Achievement?

Standard 4: Professional Development

Standard 5: Instructional Fidelity

Standard 6: Student Achievement

Standard 8: Magnet and District Relations

Statement of MSA Findings: Achievement

Standard 4: Professional Development

- Unique, magnet theme-based training has been provided for some magnet themes but not all.
- School-wide, research-based, instructionally-focused professional development that supports the theme does not exist for all themes.
- Only a few CMS administrators are using their resources to train teachers in instructional practices that support the theme or focus of the magnet school.
- CMS teachers in similar magnet schools are not consistently provided with the opportunity to collaborate and share lessons, units, or assessments with one another.

Statement of MSA Findings: Achievement

Standard 5: Instructional Fidelity

- District guidelines and state practices are consistent throughout all magnet teacher evaluations.
- CMS promotes school-wide instructional philosophies that exist using multiple modes of learning, but these are not always aligned to a school's magnet theme.
- CMS Magnet programs within schools (partial magnets) have inequitable outcomes, with minority and low-income student achievement remaining in decline.
- There is not consistent awareness of a systematic process to provide tiered interventions to all students.

Statement of MSA Findings: Achievement

Standard 6: Student Achievement

- CMS acknowledges that gaps exist between the highest and lowest performing students and has a plan for reducing these gaps.
- Comparable to whole-school programs, magnet programs within schools (partial magnets) had lower student achievement.
- Selection of students based on academic criteria precludes many students from the opportunity to enroll in a theme-based school that may be of interest to them.
- CMS magnet schools use and analyze multiple indicators to measure student success and plan and adjust instruction. Over time, student achievement has improved.

Statement of MSA Findings: Achievement

Standard 8: Magnet and District Relations

- The district has established significant pathways for students to pursue magnet themes across grade levels.
- The historical perspective to prevent racial isolation and eliminate pockets of under performing schools is unclear within the magnet schools.
- District consideration of theme needs is secondary when placing teachers, and building autonomy is intermittent.
- The district does not provide specific staffing allocation for magnet theme-based curriculum specialists.

MSA Recommendations: Achievement

- Set a goal and create a process to improve, undersubscribed, and low-achieving magnet schools and programs within one year.
- Implement a mandatory, annual review and require all magnet schools to submit to the Magnet Programs Office, for approval, a publicly available plan that addresses student recruitment, curriculum, instruction, and professional development.
- Provide staffing allocation for a theme-based curriculum specialist for each of the district's magnet themes.

MSA Recommendations: Achievement

- Coordinate professional development activities which show evidence of correlation to fidelity to the school's theme and improvement in student achievement.
- Provide teachers and magnet coordinators with professional development around the magnet theme and curriculum development.
- Organize a means to collaborate more effectively, specifically with Curriculum and Instruction staff, to give these areas greater leadership and support within schools.

MSA Statement of Findings: Magnetic

Are CMS Magnet Programs Magnetic?

Standard 3: Curriculum and Theme Fidelity

Standard 4: Professional Development

Standard 7: Leadership

Standard 8: Magnet and District Relations

Standard 9: Community Engagement and Partnerships

Standard 10: Family Engagement and Communication

Statement of MSA Findings: Magnetic

Standard 3: Curriculum and Theme Fidelity

- The magnet theme demonstrates innovative curriculum and continuously evaluates to ensure rigor and relevance.
- The magnet curriculum varied by school and theme and was not often integrated throughout the school day (with a few exceptions).
- Magnet theme curriculum fidelity varied widely by like-themed schools.
- Many magnet schools lacked a cohesive and consistent instructional focus that supported the theme of the school.

Statement of MSA Findings: Magnetic

Standard 4: Professional Development

- Consistent magnet-themed professional training for teachers and principals is not evident.
- There is not an opportunity for teachers in like-themed schools to collaborate and exchange best practices across campuses and grade levels.
- Principals have not been provided sufficient training to lead and support theme-based schools.

Statement of MSA Findings: Magnetic

Standard 7: Leadership

- Leadership is meeting to develop processes for supporting the magnet theme, mission, and vision.
- Leadership has identified some magnet program support and creative resources to overcome obstacles.
- Leadership has contacted key leaders in business and community to discuss development of additional partnerships.
- CMS school administrators' understanding of the purpose and goals of magnet schools varies greatly from program to program.
- Criteria for principals in CMS magnets are not necessarily focused on their interest in working in a theme-based magnet school.

Statement of MSA Findings: Magnetic

Standard 8: District and Magnet Relations

- Although transportation to magnet schools is effective and appears to be efficient, the transportation zones cause a great deal of anxiety, are limiting, and inequitable in access.
- District level staff is committed to magnet programs being successful and viable choice options for CMS families.
- Magnet and choice programs are a large part of the district market share of student enrollment.

Statement of MSA Findings: Magnetic

Standard 9: Community Engagement and Partnerships

- Some CMS magnet schools have partnerships with organizations that support the implementation of the curriculum and preparation for future careers and college readiness for their students, however this is not consistent.
- CMS is continuously developing its family and community engagement process related to increasing magnet theme integration.
- There is no identified support from the district to support magnet schools in developing theme-based community partnerships.
- CMS is congratulated for one of its STEM partnership with Education Studio at Discovery Place. More critical partnerships are necessary to fully engage the community.

Statement of MSA Findings: Magnetic

Standard 10: Family Engagement and Communication

- There is a parent advisory group but it does not make recommendations regarding the magnet school's operations.
- Policies and documentation of communication/support are evident but may not be systemic.
- The schools show a tradition of community showcasing including activities such as exhibitions, community showcases, and other events.
- Parents show some interest in the magnet programs. Parents attend activities, volunteer at schools, and attend individual student conferences. Documentation is maintained.
- Parent surveys are available but do not include detailed items about the magnet theme.

Statement of MSA Findings: Magnetic

- Public meetings or outreach to inform the community about the magnet theme implementation is not consistent.
- Parents believe that the magnet schools are keeping students in the district, and that they serve an important purpose within the community.
- Because of the transportation zones and limitations, school choice in CMS is complex and unclear to many families.
- Parents often apply to magnet schools to “replace” something they perceive as a worse option.
- Despite district efforts, many families are unaware of the numerous programs available to them and their students.
- Marketing materials are limited and are often only in English, making them inaccessible to all members of the community.

MSA Recommendations: Magnetic

- Adopt a full-time position with significant responsibility, resources, and autonomy to coordinate and provide professional development and training to magnet school teachers and principals, as well as coordinate purchasing and oversee all marketing and recruitment efforts.
- Convene an industry advisory board to provide validation, feedback and suggestions.
- To make them accessible to families, marketing materials, applications and choice information should be provided in multiple languages.
- Identify exemplary models of other magnet programs to compare notes with and from which to learn. This will ensure magnet schools are relevant and continually improving.

MSA Recommendations: Magnetic

- Provide magnet coordinators and teachers with professional development around the theme and curriculum development.
- Organize a means to collaborate more effectively, specifically with Curriculum & Instruction staff.
- Allow more building-level autonomy in decision-making process in multiple areas including hiring, curriculum and facility needs that will support the integration of the school's magnet theme.

Plan to Review Recommendations

Phase I: July – August 2015

- Present findings to the Board of Education, Executive Staff, Magnet Principals and Coordinators
- Establish a Working Committee to develop a plan to implement identified MSA recommendations

Phase II: September – November 2015

- Working Committee develops a plan inclusive of goals, action steps and timelines to implement identified MSA recommendations
- Present magnet implementation plan to Superintendent and Board of Education for feedback and approval

Phase III: December 2015 - Ongoing

- Implement and monitor magnet plan
- Provide updates to Board of Education

Questions & Answers