

Appendix J

Evaluation Phase Brochure

CONVERSION MAGNET SCHOOLS EVALUATION

What is the purpose of the Conversion Magnet Schools Evaluation?

The evaluation is designed to produce a scientifically rigorous study that examines the relationship between elementary magnet programs and student achievement and minority group isolation. The study will focus on schools that converted to magnet schools using federal Magnet Schools Assistance Program grants awarded in 2004 or 2007.

The study will examine the academic achievement of two groups of students:

1. Children who attend the school because it is their neighborhood school; and
2. Children from outside the neighborhood who apply to attend the school because of its magnet program.

In each case, the achievement of the magnet school students will be compared with that of students not attending the magnet schools. The study will also assess the extent to which the enrollment composition of the magnet schools changed after the magnet program was introduced.

Why is the U.S. Department of Education sponsoring this evaluation?

This evaluation will provide information to Congress, the U.S. Department of Education, and the public on the relationship between one of the most common types of magnet schools that receive federal funding and student outcomes. In addition, it will make a strong contribution to the research base on magnet schools by providing research results based on rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental research designs.

Who is participating in the study?

A total of XXX elementary schools in XX school districts from across the nation are participating in the evaluation. Fifty of the schools operate school-wide magnet programs that were introduced in 2004 or 2007. The other schools do not have magnet programs and serve as comparison schools. Within these districts, the evaluation also includes a study of students who applied to attend the magnet schools through a lottery. The study will compare the achievement of the students who were selected to attend the magnet schools with that of the students who were not selected and thus enrolled in other schools.

What data will be collected?

The evaluation team is working with district database managers to obtain 6 to 9 years of electronic student records data for the years before and after the magnet programs were introduced. Data will be collected for students attending the magnet and comparison schools, and for students who applied, but were not admitted to some of the magnet schools.

The following types of student data are being collected: standardized test scores (mathematics and English language arts/reading); demographic and residence area indicators; and information about magnet school applications and admissions.

Additional information about the magnet and comparison schools in the study will be collected through surveys of the school principals; interviews with district officials; reviews of grant applications and administrative documents; and from state and national databases.

What about confidentiality?

Responses to the study's data collections will be used only for statistical purposes. The reports prepared for this study will summarize findings across the sample and will not associate responses with a specific district, school, or individual. We will not provide information that identifies respondents, students, or districts to anyone outside the study team, except as required by law. Student data will be protected through secure data storage facilities to which only authorized analysts will have access. The research team is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the data and is further bound to do so by federal law.

Who is conducting this evaluation?

The American Institutes for Research (AIR), an independent, not-for-profit corporation, is conducting the evaluation in collaboration with Berkeley Policy Associates. The research is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Evaluation of the Institute of Education Sciences, in collaboration with the Office of Innovation and Improvement.

How can I get more information?

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