

Magnet Programs

in the Rainbow District School Board

BENDEL SERVICES INC.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

Schools with magnet programs have been a feature in the Rainbow District School Board since the first magnet program was established at Sudbury Secondary School in 1985. This was followed by three additional magnet programs at Lockerby Composite School in 1991, Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School in 1999 and 2001 (Grade 9 Pre-International Baccalaureate entry and Grade 11 I.B. entry respectively), and Lively District Secondary School in 2002. In each case, the establishment of the program was the product of a visionary principal and a core of dedicated staff who were interested in developing a new focus for the school.

It is worth noting that there are similar programs in other districts in Ontario and beyond.

On June 30, 2014, the Rainbow District School Board passed the following motion:

That an assessment of magnet programs be done as part of our next accommodation review through the lens of student achievement and well-being.

In response to the motion, the Rainbow District School Board enlisted Bendel Services, an educational consulting firm, to oversee the collection of data and to complete a report with findings and recommendations.

After discussions with senior staff, it was determined that the report would address the following four objectives:

- To determine if the schools with magnet programs are meeting the objectives that were set out for them when they were established,
- To report on the advantages of the schools with magnet programs concept in terms of program offerings, increased enrolment in the four schools with magnet programs and in the District overall, and in the availability of school choice to the community at large,
- To report on the effects of the schools with magnet programs on the remaining secondary schools in terms of program viability, enrolment, resources, staffing and school reputation in the community, and
- To provide senior staff and trustees with a data based report that would be conducive to effective and efficient decision-making in the best interests of the students, the District and the community.

1.2 Organization of the Report

This report has six sections following this introduction.

- Section 2 describes the methodology used for the review, the details associated with each of the methods, and the processes and conventions used to analyze the data.
- Section 3 gives an overview of each of the magnet programs as evidenced in the materials published by the four schools as part of their orientation packages or on their websites, and through the interviews and focus groups with staff, students and, in some cases, school council chairs.
- Section 4 represents the essence of the review and is divided into three sub-sections: 4.1 By the Numbers; 4.2 Program Viability; 4.3 Public and Professional Perceptions. This section includes findings, that is, ***“statements of what is or what is seen to be.”***
- Section 5 includes the recommendations, that is, ***“statements of what should be”*** which are products of the findings. In some cases, a recommendation is based on a single finding or multiple findings and will be identified as such. As important as the recommendations themselves are the rationales that are included with each recommendation.
- Section 6 is a summary.
- Section 7 includes a series of appendices as follows:
 - Materials used for interviews (principals and school council chairs) (Appendix “A”)
 - Materials used for focus groups (students and teaching staff) (Appendix “B”)
 - List of Findings (Appendix “C”)
 - List of Recommendations (Appendix “D”)
 - Data on Elementary School Admissions organized by secondary school (Appendix “E”)
 - Data on Elementary School Enrolment organized by elementary school (Appendix “F”)
 - Student Voice (Appendix “G”)

1.3 Clarification of Terms

In most cases, the literature refers to “magnet schools.” There are actually no magnet schools per se (a school housing a single program and no others) in the Rainbow District School Board. Rather, the Rainbow District School Board has established magnet programs in community schools. The term most commonly used in this report, then, will be “schools with magnet programs.”

The term “community school” refers to those secondary schools which do not have a magnet program.

This report does not consider all programs in Rainbow Schools which attract students from out of District and for which transportation is provided. Such programs include French Immersion, Special Education and Barrydowne College.

For reasons of brevity, the Rainbow District School Board is referred to simply as “the District” or the “RDSB” and includes all components of the District.

Finally, in the interests of confidentiality, generic terms have been used as a source for comments or points of view. Principals (both elementary and secondary), school council chairs, students and teachers are referred to only by position or role and are not identified with a particular school.

2. METHODOLOGY

The review was designed to yield both qualitative and quantitative data from several different sources. Enrolment data and transportation costs were made available from central personnel as well as from the individual schools. Qualitative information was made available through a series of interviews with secondary and elementary principals, selected school council chairs, and focus groups with students and teachers. Other data sources included program booklets and option sheets (Grades 9-12) submitted by the secondary schools and other materials about the magnet school program options made available through the schools and their websites.

2.1 Enrolment Data and Transportation Costs

Most of this data came from central office personnel who provided information on the number of transfer students from the community schools to the schools with magnet programs for the past five years (Appendix E and F). The transportation data for the 2014-2015 school year were also made available.

Individual secondary principals were asked to submit some data in the form of Grade 9 enrolment and retention rates from Grade 9 to Grade 12 which were used to address the issue of program viability in the senior grades (Grades 11-12). These data were used for internal comparisons and also as a basis for external comparisons using other districts in Ontario which have schools with magnet programs and which have community schools of a similar size to RDSB schools.

2.2 Telephone and In-Person Interviews

Telephone interviews were carried out with all secondary principals except those on Manitoulin Island and in Espanola and with a selection of elementary principals whose schools have large Grade 8 cohorts. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. In all cases, the principals were given a letter of explanation about the review and the questions that would be asked in advance of the actual interviews. These interviews were carried out between November 6 and November 24, 2014. The questions were designed to have the principals look at the presence of schools with magnet programs as both principals of individual schools and as principals in the system at large. Copies of the letter and the questions are included in "Section 7."

In addition to the telephone interviews with principals, in-person interviews were held with chairs of school councils representing both schools with magnet programs and community schools. As was the case with the principals, the chairs received a letter and the questions in advance of the interviews. The interviews took approximately one hour. They were carried out from November 18-20, 2014. Copies of the letter and the questions are included in "Section 7."

2.3 Student Focus Groups

Six focus groups of students with three to seven students per group were held over several days. These groups were homogeneous in nature and included students from selected community schools, students from selected schools with magnet programs who were in the magnet programs, and students from selected schools with magnet programs who were not in the magnet programs. These focus groups were carried out on November 19 and 20, 2014 in the individual schools.

Students were asked to complete an individual task on what they thought were the advantages and disadvantages of having magnet programs in the RDSB and were also asked to identify changes they would make. The second part of the group activity involved developing consensus statements from their individual opinions. The exercise took approximately one hour. As with the other groups, students were given a letter in advance outlining the format and purpose of the exercise. Copies of the letter and the format of the exercise are included in "Section 7."

2.4 Teacher Focus Group

A single heterogeneous focus group was held for teachers. It included four teachers from schools with magnet programs and three from community schools and also included program leaders with responsibilities for Guidance. Participants were given a letter in advance of the session which included, like the student groups, an individual task followed by a consensus exercise. The session was held on November 21, 2014 and lasted for approximately two hours. Copies of the letter and the format of the exercise are included in "Section 7."

2.5 Additional Materials

Principals of secondary schools also submitted their program booklets for the current year as well as option sheets for Grades 9-12 for the past year. Other materials reviewed included introductory packages for students and parents, materials that were placed on an individual school's website, and any other information which the principals wanted considered.

2.6 The Principle of Triangulation

The principle of triangulation outlined in Fenwick English's Curriculum Auditing was used to formulate the findings. This practice refers to the use of multiple data sources that bear upon a single point of view. "Practically speaking, it means that a condition or fact will not be reported as such unless it can be substantiated from at least two different data sources." (p.88)

2.7 A Note of Thanks

This report could not have been completed without the assistance of many individuals in the Rainbow community. Bendel Services would like to thank students, principals, the teachers, school council chairs and members of the central office staff for being so generous with their time and so willing to provide whatever information was requested.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAGNET PROGRAMS

3.1 The Arts Education Program at Sudbury Secondary School Est. 1985

The Arts Education Program in the Rainbow District School Board was the first magnet program of its kind established in Northern Ontario. It is one of the two magnet programs (along with the I.B. Program) most commonly found in districts across Ontario and Canada at large. It has two stated objectives. These are as follows:

- To foster and deepen a young person's appreciation of the arts
- To develop essential skills which will open doors to further education in performance training, employability skills and life skills

The Arts Education Program is divided into six areas of study including Dance, Theatre Arts, Media, Instrumental Music, Vocal Music, and Visual Arts. Students are required to take a minimum of eight credits (two per year) in the Arts and often move between the specialty areas which encourages integration among the arts. In addition to enrolment in specific courses, students are expected to participate in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and are encouraged to take advantage of enrichment opportunities in the form of field trips and sessions offered by masters in the field. Like the Integrated Technology Program at Lively District Secondary School, this program serves students in the college pathway and the workplace pathway as well as university bound students.

For each of the five areas after Grade 9, there are several options for students to take a "Major" or a "Minor" in a particular subject area. The total number of options for all five areas is impressive in its scope. The program is supported by an equally impressive facility as a result of the recent renovations to the school at a cost of approximately \$21.5 million. The facilities are used not only by Sudbury Secondary School students but students from other elementary and secondary schools in the District and by the community at large, all of whom are well served, in particular, by the newly refurbished auditorium which includes state-of-the-art equipment for sound and lighting. The magnet program at Sudbury Secondary School has additional staffing including a full-time Technical Director and a half-time Coordinator, Arts Education.

While no specific academic average is required for admission to Arts Education, students in the program are expected to maintain an average of 60%. The admission standards, as would be expected, vary from area to area and are highly oriented to demonstrated performance. "Admission decisions are based upon a student's demonstrated ability, potential, energy, enthusiasm, interest, commitment, academic achievement and attendance record."

In general, students are required to complete an application form consisting of two questions, take part in an interview with two or three interviewers, and are encouraged to "provide supplementary examples of their experience in their art discipline i.e. portfolio, video, audio recording and written letters of recommendation from teachers/coaches who can attest to the applicant's experience."

A much more detailed explanation divided by area (i.e., Dance or Drama) sets out what the applicant/interviewee can expect by way of an admission process. This information is clearly set out in the course calendar for Grades 10-12.

Students who successfully complete eight credits in the Arts Education Program receive the locally developed Arts Education Certificate as well as the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). As is the case with some of the other magnet programs, students can earn a French Immersion Certificate. Finally, in keeping with RDSB practice, students residing outside the attendance area for Sudbury Secondary School but registered in the Arts Education Program receive transportation. If they do not remain in the program, they can remain at Sudbury Secondary but are not entitled to transportation.

Sudbury Secondary School currently has 625 students of which 294 (47%) are in Arts Education. Of the 294 students, 234 are bussed including 218 out-of-area students.

3.2 The Science and Technology Education Program (STEP) at Lockerby Composite School Est. 1991

The Science and Technology Education Program (STEP) is unique to the Rainbow District School Board. Lockerby Composite School's course calendar defines STEP as "a specialty program focusing on Science, Technology, Mathematics and English. It is a successful learning opportunity for talented students in preparation for leadership and careers in the areas of Science, Engineering, Design, Medicine, Business and Computer Technology." The STEP program receives a central budget of \$10,000 each year to support the cost of enhancing technology at Lockerby Composite School.

Its stated objectives are as follows:

- To encourage an interest in Science and Technology and how they interrelate in the student's life
- To give students the opportunity to explore their curriculum in non-traditional ways through the use of inquiry-based learning
- To introduce students to careers related to Science and Technology
- To assist students in developing their problem-solving skills and thinking skills by analyzing, correlating, comparing, experimenting and synthesizing
- To develop proper methods of communication and collaboration through written and electronic media

Students enrolled in the STEP are required to take six designated STEP courses in Grade 9, three or more STEP courses in Grade 10, one of three specialized technology courses in Grade 11, two other specially-designated Science courses in Grade 11 and one specially-designated Science course in Grade 12 in such fields as Technological Design, Health Care, Environmental Science, Forensics or Engineering Science.

Building on the emphasis on technology in the larger STEP option is the "Laptop Program" whose teaching and learning is heavily oriented toward individualized instruction and online learning in "specially outfitted classrooms with Internet connections, projectors and printers." Admission into the STEP option is a 75% average.

As is the case with the I.B. Program, successful completion of STEP results in the awarding of the OSSD, a locally-developed STEP Certificate and potentially a French Immersion Certificate. Finally, in keeping with RDSB practice, students residing outside the attendance area for Lockerby Composite School but registered in STEP receive transportation. If they do not remain in the program, they can remain at Lockerby but are not entitled to transportation.

Lockerby Composite School currently has 789 students of which 617 (78%) are in STEP. Of the 617 students, 526 are bussed including 441 out-of-area students.

3.3 The International Baccalaureate Program (I.B.) at Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School Est. 1999/2001

The International Baccalaureate Program was established at Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School in 1999 (Grade 9 Pre I.B. Program) and in 2001 (Grade 11 I.B.). Along with an Arts magnet program, the provision of an I.B. Program for Grade 11 and 12 students at a public secondary school is one of the most common offerings in districts across the province and the country who have elected to establish magnet programs in their systems. Typically, those schools also have a Pre-International Baccalaureate Program for Grade 9 and 10 students.

The presence of an I.B. Program is also very typical of many independent schools in the province as well as schools seeking to establish and maintain a reputation for high academic achievement which is associated with the I.B. option. In a jurisdiction like Ontario, which includes a fair degree of choice among four publicly-funded options and a large number of independent schools, the I.B. Program is seen as a way of attracting students from other systems into a system providing that option. The I.B. Program receives a central budget of \$50,000 each year to support the training costs for staff as well as exam fees for students. Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School also receives a 0.5 Guidance Counsellor allocation which is used to fill the position of the I.B. Coordinator.

I.B. schools are required to meet the expectations set by the international organization to meet the objectives of the program which includes a “balanced education to facilitate geographic and cultural mobility, and to promote international understanding through a shared academic experience.”

In order to qualify for the I.B. Diploma, the candidate “must successfully complete two years of study and write examinations in six areas or groups which resemble the same groupings for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Three of the examinations undertaken must be taken at the Standard Level (SL) and three at the Higher Level (HL).” In addition, he/she must complete the Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) requirement (like the Ontario Community Service Requirement) which can be started as early as Grade 11, complete a Theory of Knowledge course and write “an extended essay of 3,500 to 4,000 words that meets the standards of international scholarship.”

With regard to admission, Lo-Ellen Park sets out a series of admission requirements in its publications. “In general, students considering the I.B. Program must first complete the I.B. Preparatory Program in Grades 9 and 10 but applications to the program in Grade 10 or 11 may be considered on an individual basis.” The publication goes on to say that admission is based upon the following requirements:

- A minimum average of 80% in English, French, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography
- The recommendation of the Grade 8 academic teacher(s) and/or principal
- Learning skills that suggest self-discipline and commitment to academic success
- Completion of the application form with necessary documentation
- Attendance of student and parent/guardian at an orientation/interview session in the spring prior to entry if requested

Once in the program the students are required to carry a very challenging workload which includes writing both locally-designed examinations and I.B. required examinations while maintaining a high level of involvement in school and community life to meet the ancillary requirements of the program. The I.B. Program is, and is seen to be, a

rigorous education whose completion bodes well for students entering a post-secondary program that requires a great deal of independent learning.

Students in the I.B. Program earn the I.B. Diploma as well as their OSSD and, given their course selection, have the opportunity to earn a French Immersion Certificate. Finally, in keeping with RDSB practice, students residing outside the attendance area for Lo-Ellen Park but registered in the I.B. Program receive transportation. If they do not remain in the program, they can remain at Lo-Ellen Park but are not entitled to transportation.

Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School currently has 598 students of which 274 students (46%) are in the I.B. Program. Of the 274 students, 180 are bussed including 114 out-of-area students.

3.4 The Integrated Technology Program (IT) at Lively District Secondary School Est. 2002

The Integrated Technology Program (IT) at Lively District Secondary School is unique in the Rainbow District School Board and relatively unique in the province as a whole in that it is developed, in part, for college and university pathway students. Magnet programs tend to be for university-bound students in the province though Arts magnet programs, like Sudbury Secondary School, welcome students who will be going to college as well as university. Indeed, Lively District Secondary School has expanded the Integrated Technology Program even further through the provision of locally-developed courses in technology for Grade 9 and 10 students “who have experienced difficulties in English, Mathematics and Science.”

Perhaps because of the broad audience for whom the IT program was developed, the admission criteria are rather general in nature, simply stating that the program is open to students with “good work habits, excellent attendance and an interest in applied technology.” College-bound students are required to earn six technology credits within their first four years and maintain 70% in those courses. It is noteworthy that the course requirements in this program are a reversal of the normal pattern which would usually see additional courses being required in the university pathway.

In addition to Co-Operative Education and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, which are traditional features of most secondary schools, Lively District Secondary School highlights a work experience program which includes one to four weeks in a field which complements the student’s classroom work and career direction. This is very much in keeping with the school’s commitment to working with business and industry in the community to foster partnerships and to enhance out-of-school learning opportunities for students in the program.

While not obvious in the program description, IT differs substantially from STEP in that it focuses on applied technology and, as such, appeals to a different group of students.

Students meeting the program’s requirement of a 70% average in the technology courses required in this option are awarded a locally-developed Integrated Technology Certificate along with the OSSD. Finally, in keeping with the RDSB practice, students residing outside the attendance area of Lively but registered in IT receive transportation. If they do not remain in the program, they can remain at Lively but are not entitled to transportation.

Lively District Secondary School currently has 304 students of which 79 (26%) are in IT. Of the 79 students, 63 are bussed including 39 out-of-area students.

Table 1 Overview of Student Enrolment in Magnet Programs 2010-2011 to 2014-2015															
School Year	Sudbury Secondary School Arts Education			Lockerby Composite School Science and Technology Program			Lively District Secondary School Integrated Technology			Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School International Baccalaureate			Total		
	Total Enrolment	Magnet Program Enrolment	% Magnet Program Enrolment	Total Enrolment	Magnet Program Enrolment	% Magnet Program Enrolment	Total Enrolment	Magnet Program Enrolment	% Magnet Program Enrolment	Total Enrolment	Magnet Program Enrolment	% Magnet Program Enrolment	Total Enrolment	Magnet Program Enrolment	% Magnet Program Enrolment
2010-2011	570	320	56%	964	742	77%	374	163	44%	754	183	24%	2662	1408	53%
2011-2012	556	282	51%	944	719	76%	345	167	48%	746	239	32%	2591	1407	54%
2012-2013	525	246	47%	908	688	76%	337	133	39%	655	225	34%	2425	1292	53%
2013-2014	545	242	44%	882	664	75%	312	100	32%	611	232	38%	2350	1238	53%
2014-2015	625	294	47%	789	617	78%	304	79	26%	598	274	46%	2316	1264	55%

The following is noted:

- The overall student enrolment in three of the secondary schools with magnet programs is declining which is mirrored by the overall enrolment in all secondary schools in the Rainbow District School Board.
- The overall magnet program student enrolment, as a percentage, has remained relatively stable over the past five years with the exception of Lively District Secondary School.
- In this current school year, 55% of the students enrolled in the four schools are enrolled in magnet programs.
- Enrolment in the magnet program at Sudbury Secondary School has declined by approximately 10%, in terms of percentage of the overall student enrolment, over the past five years.
- Enrolment in the magnet program at Lockerby Composite School has remained relatively stable, as a percentage, in comparison to the overall enrolment of Lockerby Composite School.
- Enrolment in the magnet program at Lively District Secondary School has declined by slightly less than 20%, in terms of percentage of the overall student enrolment, over the past five years.
- Enrolment in the magnet program at Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School has increased by 22%, in terms of percentage of the overall student enrolment, over the past five years.

Introductory Comment on Findings #1 and #2

Each of the magnet programs is supported by a variety of hard copy and online materials that set out key aspects of the program including program goals, admission requirements, and range of options available. There is no question that the information included in these materials helps students and parents understand what involvement in the program entails. The quality of the information, however, varies from school to school in terms of the sophistication of presentation. In many cases, the material on the various websites has not always been updated to match what is available in hard copy.

There is a similar variability in the quality of the stated purposes of the various programs, ranging from those which are written as broad goals for students through to program descriptions. In order for a program's effectiveness to be accurately measured, it should focus on student learning outcomes. Well-articulated student learning outcomes also allow staff to address emergent issues and make decisions based on student learning.

Finding #1

Variability exists among the materials used to advertise the magnet programs in terms of the level of sophistication in presentation. Some discrepancies exist between the materials presented in hard copy and school websites.

Finding #2

Online and hard copy descriptions of the magnet programs are designed to be helpful to students and parents. Program objectives, however, are not clearly articulated in terms of student learning outcomes which could prove more useful in evaluating the degree to which the program is meeting its objectives.

4. WHAT THE DATA REVEAL

4.1 By the Numbers

This section deals with considerations that are revealed through quantitative data that were gathered by Rainbow District School Board central staff. It includes figures on enrolment, EQAO results, credit accumulation and transportation costs.

4.1.1 Student Achievement on EQAO Assessments and School Quality

Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s in Ontario and in Canada, two somewhat diametrically opposed views took root in educational scholarship that affected both government policy and public perception about what constituted a “good school.” The first was based on a set of correlates that saw a school’s effectiveness as a product of several factors that pertained not only to student achievement but also to roles and interrelationships that defined an effective school as something broader than the conclusions drawn from test results in the key areas of language and mathematics. The second, influenced by long-standing practice in the United States, placed a heavy emphasis on student performance on standardized tests.

In the case of the former, scholars such as Larry Lezotte, Philip Schlechty, Roland Barth and others built on the seminal work of Ron Edmonds who saw effective schools as those with the following characteristics: strong instructional leadership, a clear and focused mission, a safe and orderly environment, a climate of high expectations, frequent monitoring of student progress, positive home-school relationships and opportunities for learning along with time on learning tasks. While putting a strong emphasis on student learning outcomes, this movement rejected the essentially positivist stance that effectiveness can only be measured by observable results in certain areas of student performance. This school of thought has not rejected the idea of measuring effectiveness by test results; it has rejected the idea that only performance on tests should be the determiner of effectiveness.

In the case of the latter, and spurred on by business and industrial predilections, others felt that performance on test results in the areas of language and mathematics should be the chief determiners of effectiveness. In establishing its Education Quality and Accountability Office in 1996, Ontario has certainly accepted the notion that results on province-wide assessments are significant reflections of school performance but the province has never, in any formal or informal way, equated only assessment results with earmarks of an effective school.

The EQAO assessments, closely aligned as they are to the Ontario curriculum and administered in a controlled fashion with proper preparation and meaningful follow-up activities, are among the best in North America. EQAO results merit scrutiny but the ranking of schools based on those results is, at best, questionable. Trustees, educators, parents and the community should analyse these results in the context of those factors for effectiveness outlined above and consider one of several data sources. The results that are reprinted here, therefore, should be seen in this context.

Table 2					
Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test Results for RDSB Schools 2009 – 2014					
(Successful Percentage for Fully Participating First Time Eligible Students)					
School	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
RDSB (All)	81%	79%	76%	74%	75%
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	62%	62%	65%	68%	57%
Confederation Secondary School	71%	73%	73%	69%	63%
Espanola High School	80%	66%	70%	55%	68%
Lasalle Secondary School	78%	69%	70%	73%	75%
Lively District Secondary School	79%	88%	63%	72%	69%
Lockerby Composite School	93%	89%	89%	90%	94%
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	90%	89%	90%	88%	89%
Manitoulin Secondary School	74%	79%	74%	64%	64%
Sudbury Secondary School	84%	75%	71%	64%	69%

The following is noted:

- The mean over five years for the schools with magnet programs is 81.7%; the mean for the community schools is 68.88%.
- Lockerby Composite School (91%) has consistently had the highest scores over the last five years.
- Chelmsford Valley District Composite School (62.8%) has consistently had the lowest scores over the last five years.
- Sudbury Secondary School (range 64% to 84%) and Espanola (range 55% to 80%) have shown the most variation over the past five years.
- Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School has shown the least variation over the last five years (range 88% to 90%).
- Of the community schools, Lasalle Secondary School has scored closest to the RDSB average over five years.

Table 3					
Grade 9 Applied Mathematics Results for RDSB Schools 2009 – 2014					
(Percentage of All Students At or Above the Provincial Standard – Levels 3 and 4)					
School	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
RDSB (All)	36%	40%	41%	43%	37%
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	24%	18%	23%	27%	52%
Confederation Secondary School	37%	45%	49%	38%	26%
Espanola High School	41%	40%	56%	54%	43%
Lasalle Secondary School	37%	33%	34%	42%	30%
Lively District Secondary School	64%	39%	50%	43%	64%
Lockerby Composite School	58%	59%	50%	41%	77%
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	31%	37%	45%	68%	35%
Manitoulin Secondary School	21%	35%	24%	21%	23%
Sudbury Secondary School	30%	51%	37%	52%	38%

The following is noted:

- Until 2013-2014, RDSB was making consistent gains in Grade 9 Applied Mathematics results.
- The mean over five years for the schools with magnet programs is 48.5%; the mean for the community schools is 35%.
- Lockerby Composite School (57%) has consistently had the highest scores over the last five years.
- Manitoulin Secondary School (24.8%) has consistently had the lowest scores over the last five years.
- Chelmsford Valley District Composite School has shown the greatest improvement in the last five years.
- Chelmsford Valley District Composite School (range 18% to 52%) and Lockerby Composite School (range 41% to 77%) have shown the most variation over the past five years. Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School (range 31% to 68%) has the largest variation.
- Lasalle Secondary School has shown the least variation over the last five years (range 30% to 42%).
- Of the community schools, Confederation Secondary School has scored closest to the RDSB average over five years.
- Of the schools with magnet programs, all four schools scored above the RDSB average over five years with Lively District Secondary School and Lockerby Composite School scoring significantly above the RDSB average over five years.

Table 4					
Grade 9 Academic Mathematics Results for RDSB Schools 2009 – 2014					
(Percentage of All Students At or Above the Provincial Standard – Levels 3 and 4)					
School	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
RDSB (All)	78%	83%	73%	75%	78%
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	33%	76%	45%	53%	75%
Confederation Secondary School	86%	77%	73%	64%	74%
Espanola High School	88%	90%	88%	86%	80%
Lasalle Secondary School	67%	66%	64%	51%	51%
Lively District Secondary School	69%	87%	77%	80%	84%
Lockerby Composite School	85%	90%	74%	88%	82%
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	90%	93%	89%	89%	88%
Manitoulin Secondary School	78%	80%	84%	64%	80%
Sudbury Secondary School	47%	58%	48%	62%	76%

The following is noted:

- Like virtually all schools in the province, the results for Academic Mathematics are significantly better than the results for the Applied pathway.
- The mean over five years for the schools with magnet programs is 77.8%; the mean for the community schools is 70.92%
- Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School (89.8%) has consistently had the highest score over the last five years.
- Chelmsford Valley District Composite School (56.4%) has consistently had the lowest score over the last five years.
- Chelmsford Valley District Composite School (range 33% to 75%) and Sudbury Secondary School (range 47% to 76%) have shown the most variation over the past five years.
- Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School has shown the least variation over the last five years (range 88% to 93%).
- Of the community schools, Espanola High School has scored highest in the RDSB over the last five years.
- Of the schools with magnet programs, three schools scored above the RDSB average over five years with Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School and Lockerby Composite School scoring significantly above the RDSB average over five years.
- Of the schools with magnet programs, Sudbury Secondary School was the school to score below the RDSB average over the course of five years.

Introductory Comment on Finding #3

As noted above, EQAO results have to be read and studied with caution. Still they are important data sources and are treated seriously by trustees, educators, parents and the community. While the variation from year to year shows how results change quickly depending on a different cohort of students, longitudinal data, including results for five years as presented above, point to conclusions that are strongly data based. It is also important to note that demographics play a significant role in student achievement.

Finding #3

Schools with magnet programs generally score higher on EQAO assessments than community schools. The results in Grade 9 Applied Mathematics showed a steady improvement from 2010 to 2013.

4.1.2 Credit Accumulation

Another measure of student achievement is credit accumulation. All schools attempt, through various means, to have all students earn a standard of eight credits in a year or, conversely, to reduce the number of students earning less than eight credits. The following four tables show results in two categories in Grade 9 and 10. In the case of the charts showing eight or more credits for Grade 9 and five or less credits for Grade 9, a school would attempt to see the percentages rise in the former and fall in the latter. The same is true for the Grade 10 charts. The school would attempt to raise the percentages in sixteen or more credits and reduce the percentages for thirteen or less credits.

Table 5 Credit Accumulation Grade 9 Students 8 or more credits					
<u>Schools</u>	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Rainbow District School Board	84%	84%	83%	80%	83%
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	92%	86%	70%	66%	69%
Confederation Secondary School	82%	73%	86%	77%	87%
Espanola High School	82%	78%	78%	76%	77%
Lasalle Secondary School	70%	81%	81%	83%	82%
Lively District Secondary School	90%	93%	91%	83%	93%
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	94%	88%	93%	95%	93%
Lockerby Composite School	98%	97%	97%	94%	95%
Manitoulin Secondary School	74%	88%	73%	76%	67%
Sudbury Secondary School	81%	62%	61%	57%	69%

The following is noted:

- The RDSB has, for the past five years, a consistently high record of ensuring its Grade 9 students achieve eight or more credits (a range of 80% to 84% over all five years).
- For the 2013-2014 school year, four schools were above the District average. Of these four, one was a community school and three were schools with magnet programs.
- The average percentage of students earning eight or more credits in 2013-2014 in schools with magnet programs was 87%; the average in the community schools was 76%.
- Chelmsford Valley District Composite School showed the greatest variation with a range of 66% to 92%; Lockerby Composite School showed the least variation with a range of 94% to 98%.

Table 6
Credit Accumulation
Grade 9 Students
5 or less credits

<u>Schools</u>	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Rainbow District School Board	8%	8%	9%	11%	9%
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	4%	0%	10%	24%	23%
Confederation Secondary School	11%	12%	9%	12%	6%
Espanola High School	7%	9%	10%	13%	12%
Lasalle Secondary School	15%	11%	10%	10%	9%
Lively District Secondary School	4%	3%	5%	8%	7%
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	3%	6%	4%	3%	5%
Lockerby Composite School	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%
Manitoulin Secondary School	11%	5%	11%	13%	15%
Sudbury Secondary School	9%	25%	22%	18%	17%

The following is noted:

- The RDSB has, for the past five years, a consistently low rate of students earning five or fewer credits in Grade 9.
- Confederation Secondary School, Lasalle Secondary School, Lively District Secondary School, Lockerby Composite School, and Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School (two community schools and three schools with magnet programs) are the most successful in avoiding a low credit accumulation in Grade 9.
- Chelmsford Valley District Composite School and Sudbury Secondary School (one community school and one school with a magnet program) have the opportunity to achieve the greatest area of growth.
- Since 2009-2010, the average for the system has remained fairly stable (a range of 8% to 11%) with two community schools (Confederation Secondary School and Lasalle Secondary School) reducing the number of students earning five or fewer credits.

<p style="text-align: center;">Table 7 Credit Accumulation Grade 10 Students 16 or more credits</p>					
<u>Schools</u>	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Rainbow District School Board	59%	79%	75%	69%	70%
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	49%	80%	66%	67%	56%
Confederation Secondary School	58%	76%	72%	75%	68%
Espanola High School	55%	71%	65%	50%	53%
Lasalle Secondary School	38%	69%	71%	65%	73%
Lively District Secondary School	74%	92%	82%	78%	84%
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	81%	92%	88%	84%	85%
Lockerby Composite School	84%	95%	91%	86%	89%
Manitoulin Secondary School	59%	62%	66%	67%	55%
Sudbury Secondary School	42%	67%	54%	40%	55%

The following is noted:

- The RDSB has had an 11% increase in the number of students obtaining 16 or more credits over the past five years.
- All schools have shown increases.
- The average among the community schools was 63%; among the schools with magnet programs it was 77% over the past five years.

Table 8
Credit Accumulation
Grade 10 Students
13 or less credits

<u>Schools</u>	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Rainbow District School Board	27%	12%	15%	17%	17%
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	26%	13%	21%	16%	22%
Confederation Secondary School	26%	12%	17%	13%	20%
Espanola High School	27%	14%	19%	24%	24%
Lasalle Secondary School	44%	18%	17%	19%	14%
Lively District Secondary School	15%	6%	12%	9%	10%
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	8%	4%	5%	6%	6%
Lockerby Composite School	7%	2%	3%	3%	5%
Manitoulin Secondary School	32%	26%	18%	18%	24%
Sudbury Secondary School	41%	22%	36%	46%	30%

The following is noted:

- There has been a significant decrease in the percentage of Grade 10 students earning 13 or fewer credits in the last five years.
- For the 2013-2014 school year, the average percentage among schools with magnet programs was 12%; the average among community schools was 20%.
- Five schools are doing less well than RDSB, including one school with a magnet program.
- Lasalle Secondary School is achieving greater success than the RDSB average.

Introductory Comment on Finding #4

In many ways, averages on courses and credit accumulation are as significant as EQAO results. Both sets of data provide trends over time. Neither set of results can be dismissed, however, both together give a broader picture of how schools are performing.

Finding #4

In most cases, students in magnet programs are achieving credits at a higher rate than is the case in community schools. Community schools are showing greater improvement rates in Grade 10 results in particular.

4.1.3 Attracting Non-RDSB Students to Magnet Programs

As noted in the following section, one of the advantages of having magnet programs is increased enrolment from other systems of students who wish to access specialized programs. Not only does this enhance the reputation of the RDSB it also substantially increases the revenue base for the system.

Under the current funding model, the Ministry provides each District with a basic grant of \$12,000 per full time equivalent secondary student. Central staff has provided a list of the number of students who entered the four magnet programs from outside the RDSB into Grade 9 for the 2014-2015 school year. These figures are shown below.

Table 9			
Non-RDSB Students Entering Grade 9 in 2014-2015			
School	In the Magnet Programs	Not in the Magnet Programs	Total
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	--	4	4
Confederation Secondary School	--	21	21
Lasalle Secondary School	--	14	14
Lively District Secondary School	3	9	12
Lockerby Composite School	48	8	56
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	7	14	21
Sudbury Secondary School	24	28	52
Total	82	98	180

The following is noted:

- The schools with magnet programs that attract the largest number of students are STEP and Arts Education.
- At \$12,000 per student, this means an additional \$984,000 for the system for 2014-2015 for the Grade 9 students who entered RDSB who were not in a RDSB elementary school in Grade 8.
- It is estimated that there are currently 322 out-of-District students in the magnet programs.
- With the current funding model of \$12,000 per student, these 322 students generate an additional \$3,864,000 in revenue for the RDSB each year.
- In order to accommodate the 322 students currently enrolled in a magnet program, Grades 9 to 12, Rainbow is able to employ an additional 18 FTE secondary school teachers.
- The average cost of a RDSB secondary school teacher is \$95,681 (including benefits) resulting in an additional cost of \$1,722,000.

Several of the magnet programs have multiple entry points. Students from outside the system can enter the magnet programs in later grades so that the above figure of 322 students represents a minimum number of students in the magnet programs coming from a non-Rainbow school.

Introductory Comment on Findings #5 and 6

There are a few factors that need to be mentioned. Students choose to stay in the magnet programs. As well, there is significant additional revenue as a result of attracting students to the Rainbow District School Board magnet programs.

Another factor is the movement of students from the community schools to the schools with magnet programs which increases pressure on the former in terms of program viability.

Finding #5

The presence of schools with magnet programs in the District attracts non-RDSB students to come into the system thereby generating a substantial increase in grants for the RDSB that exceed all costs for the programs including transportation.

Finding #6

The high retention rate in existing magnet programs will create a challenge for community schools.

4.1.4 Transportation

Of all the issues that surround the presence of schools with magnet programs in the Rainbow District School Board, the perceived cost of transportation to the magnet programs is the most contentious. Central staff was asked to carry out an analysis of transportation costs for the current year and then superimpose upon those costs the reductions that would be effected if the magnet programs disappeared and students were returned to their community schools.

Table 10		
School Year Data Breakdown in Transportation, 2014-2015		
In order to have a true picture of the cost savings, all students in magnet programs were removed from school bus routes, and have been reassigned to their home schools. Some students are now walkers to and from school and no longer require transportation.		
October 31 st Expenditures		
Board	Yearly Expenditure	
Rainbow District School Board	\$11,713,045.93	
Removal of Rainbow District School Board's Magnet Programs		
Board	Yearly Expenditures	Difference
Rainbow District SB	\$10,995,416.08	\$717,629.85

The following is noted:

- The cost of transporting all RDSB students, K to 12, each year is \$11, 713, 045.93.
- The incremental cost to the system of transporting students in magnet programs, out of area, from Grades 9 to 12 is \$717,629.85.

Table 11	
Incremental Funding and Expenditures of Magnet Programs, 2014-2015	
Number of students out of board, Grades 9-12	322
<u>Funding:</u>	
Per pupil funding - Grants for Student Needs	\$3,864,000
<u>Expenditures:</u>	
18 FTE teachers	\$1,722,000
Additional Staff:	\$157,300
Technical Director (1.0)	
Coordinator, Arts Education (0.5)	
Guidance Counsellor (0.5)	
Additional Support	\$60,000
Transportation for students in magnet programs out of area	\$717,629
Net surplus for one school year	\$1,207,071

Introductory Comment on Finding #7

Transportation is, without doubt, the single most contentious issue for the public and for most educators surrounding schools with magnet programs in the Rainbow District School Board. It is equally obvious, as shown in the next section, that most are unaware of the specific figures surrounding the benefits of increased system enrolment as a result of the schools with magnet programs and are equally unaware of the transportation costs themselves. When the decision on schools with magnet programs is made, it would be in the best interests of all members of the educational community to have before them the data that suggests the transportation costs are likely not as significant as people believe them to be.

Finding #7

The revenues generated by the increased enrolment in the RDSB's magnet programs by students external to the system significantly exceed the cost of transportation to the schools with magnet programs.

4.2 Program Viability

The Ontario Ministry of Education requires that students earn a total of 30 credits to obtain the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Of these 30, 18 are mandatory with these credits usually being front-end loaded in Grades 9 and 10. This results in the Grade 9 and 10 program being very similar across all of Ontario's secondary schools. The major difference is the inclusion in some schools of a French Immersion program which usually causes an additional impact on the timetable as early as Grade 9.

Schools with a relatively small enrolment can generally, therefore, compete with large schools in Grades 9 and 10 in terms of subjects offered. In the Senior Division, however, the effects of small or declining enrolments are most evident. Traditionally schools with smaller enrolments have limited options in the areas of the Arts, Technology, Business Education, the Social Sciences, Canadian Studies and second and third languages, particularly for students in the college or workplace pathways. Principals in small schools usually have to offer options in the Senior Division on a two-year cycle or offer combined classes (combined by grade or by pathway). While this is acceptable practice, it create challenges for staff and is not a preferred option for students.

In order to examine the question of program viability, data were gathered through program booklets and option sheets for the 2014-2015 school year in seven Rainbow District School Board secondary schools. The number of courses in optional areas in the Social Sciences, Arts, Business, Technology, Canadian Studies and French including French Immersion courses was examined. In a number of RDSB secondary schools there are also courses in Native Studies and Guidance but these were not included in the sample.

These data were used to compare the number and range of options in the Senior Division among the schools with magnet programs and community schools. They were also compared with schools of a similar size in schools from two other Ontario districts. These comparisons were carried out to determine if, indeed, there were fewer options in Grades 11 and 12 in the community schools and schools with magnet programs and whether the range of options was the same in other schools of similar size in other districts.

Table 12 Grade 11 and 12 Courses Delivered in the Senior Division in Selected Schools in the RDSB for 2014-2015 (as of October 31, 2014) (Arranged in Order of School Enrolment)		
School	Enrolment	Grade 11-12 Optional Courses Delivered
Lockerby Composite School	789	55
Lasalle Secondary School	727	50
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	598	49
Confederation Secondary School	603	41
Sudbury Secondary School	625	86*
Lively District Secondary School	304	40
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	219	30

*Several of these are half-credit courses and several more would be combined classes with the Arts Education students and non-magnet students taking one of these options in a combined class resulting in one delivered option but two course codes.

The following is noted:

- The highest number of options available in any of the schools is at Sudbury Secondary School which is slightly below the mean in terms of school population for the District as a whole; the lowest is at Chelmsford Valley District Composite School which has a population that is significantly smaller than the other secondary schools.
- With the exception of Sudbury Secondary School whose number of options is high due to the provision of half courses, the number of options decline with the enrolment in the school.
- The mean number of options for the District of selected secondary schools is 50; the median is 49.
- The mean number of options in the schools with magnet programs is 57.5; the mean in the community schools is 40.
- Two of the schools with magnet programs are below the mean for the District as a whole (Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School and Lively District Secondary School); two are above the mean (Sudbury Secondary School and Lockerby Composite School).

These data point to the fact that program options decline with enrolment. A low enrolment not only reduces the number of options but also makes timetabling increasingly difficult as principals look for creative ways of maintaining a range of options that keep students in the school.

In addition, the courses that are likely to be cancelled in the Senior Division are often those designed for college and workplace pathway students. By virtue of numbers, the university pathway courses are more likely to be scheduled without difficulty. As noted above, principals are creative in their attempts to meet the needs of these students and in doing so often find themselves having to schedule larger than preferred classes in the university pathway to keep small classes in the college and workplace pathways that would not normally run on the basis of numbers alone.

Introductory Comment on Finding #8

Enrolment and program viability in the community schools are affected by the attraction of the schools with magnet programs. The larger issue is the presence in the system of excess student spaces in secondary schools overall.

Finding #8

Along with the perception that the presence of schools with magnet programs is affecting program viability in community schools, course offerings in RDSB schools in optional areas in the Senior Division are actually affected by a reduced enrolment with the average number of offerings in the community schools being below the average in the schools with magnet programs.

By way of an external comparison, data were collected from two other districts which had schools at roughly the same size as Rainbow District School Board schools. These are shown below:

Table 13 Grade 11 and 12 Courses Offered in the Senior Division In Selected Schools in the RDSB for 2014 – 2015 in Comparison to Non-RDSB Schools of Similar Size (Arranged in Order of School Enrolment)					
RDSB	Enrolment	No. of Options	Non-RDSB School	Enrolment	No. Of Options
Lockerby Composite School	789	55	School A	904	48
Lasalle Secondary School	727	50	School B	734	50
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	598	49	School C	646	53
Confederation Secondary School	603	41	School D	646	53
Sudbury Secondary School	625	86*	School E	586	48
Lively District Secondary School	304	40	School F	290	35
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	219	32	School G	258	31

The following is noted:

- With the exception of Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School, the schools with magnet programs in the RDSB generally offer a greater variety of options in Grade 11 and 12 than other schools outside the RDSB of similar size.
- Sudbury Secondary School stands out among all schools but, as noted earlier, there are special circumstances in the Arts Education Program which make this an unfair comparison.
- The community schools in the RDSB are closely aligned with schools of similar size in other districts though Confederation Secondary School stands out as offering fewer options than its counterpart in another district.

The Sudbury Student Services Consortium was asked to look at transportation costs associated with schools with magnet programs. All RDSB students were returned to their home schools. It is important to note that not all RDSB students would return to their community school if the magnet programs no longer existed.

Table 14 Enrolment of RDSB Schools with No System Magnet Programs		
School	October 31, 2014 Enrolment	Potential Enrolment
Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	219	398
Confederation Secondary School	603	710
Lasalle Secondary School	727	997
Lively District Secondary School	304	369
Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	598	580
Lockerby Composite School	789	407
Sudbury Secondary School	625	404

The following is noted:

- All community schools would gain substantially, with Lasalle Secondary School and Chelmsford Valley District Composite School gaining the most enrolment.
- All schools with magnet programs, with the exception of Lively District Secondary School, would lose substantially with Lockerby Composite School and Sudbury Secondary School experiencing the largest decline in enrolment.

The conclusion is quite clear. Program viability would remain an issue in the Rainbow District schools. The venues would be different but the problem would remain the same.

A comment that pertains more to the next section is, perhaps, particularly appropriate as an end note here. When students and school council chairs from the community schools were asked about whether or not they or their children were able to take all the courses they wanted over four years, all stated that they could. While program viability remains a legitimate concern for educators, the users of the system do not share the same concerns.

Introductory Comment on Findings #9 and 10

Most secondary schools below 800 students tend to have difficulties in offering a variety of options in the Senior Division and must address this in timetabling. Over time failure to offer courses results in students transferring to other schools. We do not know whether this is the case for RDSB which, in turn, results yet again in fewer options and more pressure on the school to maintain its enrolment.

Finding #9

Challenges with program viability at the RDSB's community schools is typical of schools of the same size in other districts, including districts which do not have schools with magnet programs as an additional pressure. On the whole, however, and due to the efforts of staff, students and parents feel that the options they have available meet their needs.

Finding #10

Returning students in magnet programs to their home schools would not address the overall problem of program viability but simply change the schools where the problem exists. It is important to note that not all RDSB students would return to their community school if the magnet programs no longer existed.

4.3 Public and Professional Perceptions

This section is organized around the questions which were asked of the principals and school council chairs and the questions which were addressed during the focus groups. As evidenced in Appendix “A” and Appendix “B” the questions and the focus group task were aligned to focus on three areas: advantages, disadvantages and possible changes with other questions fitting into these three broad categories.

In addition to the larger questions that were addressed such as advantages, disadvantages, type of magnets and location, some ancillary questions were also addressed such as differences in presentations to Grade 8 students between schools with magnet programs and community schools, additional resources to magnet programs (beyond transportation), and teacher recruitment among schools. The larger questions are given separate sections in this report; the ancillary ones are grouped under “Other Areas.”

Question #1: What are the advantages of having magnet programs in the system?

This question was asked of all elementary and secondary principals, all school council chairs and was addressed in both the teacher and student focus groups. It is worth noting that all individuals or groups acknowledged that there were definite advantages to having magnet programs. In all, ten advantages were identified by the respondents.

School council chairs from both schools with magnet programs and community schools indicated that they liked the idea of a system presenting students and parents with a range of choices for secondary education. This sentiment was shared by students from both schools with magnet programs and community schools.

Principals in particular recognized that magnet programs did attract students from other districts (e.g., French language and Catholic) and added to the revenue that could be used to the benefit of the system as a whole. As will be noted in responses to the next question, however, there was a great deal of concern that the funds generated by the schools with magnet programs were being used for the transportation of students attending these schools with magnet programs outside their regular attendance area.

All groups recognized that the schools with magnet programs brought together like-minded students who felt that learning was enhanced simply by having a critical mass of learners who had the same interests and the same career goals. This was most clearly felt by the students, parents and staff associated with the Arts Education Program at Sudbury Secondary School.

Somewhat surprisingly, students, teachers and some secondary principals felt that while there was apparent homogeneity within the student body in schools with magnet programs, this did not lead to elitism in the school but rather appeared to foster a spirit of acceptance among students. The students in all programs concurred. When asked, for instance, whether the presence of students in magnet programs in their schools made them feel like “second class citizens” the students in the schools with magnet programs but not enrolled in the programs were very emphatic that this was not the case. They pointed out that they were often enrolled in the same classes and while they were generally aware of which program their fellow students were in, there did not appear to be a difference.

Closely related to the presence of a critical mass of students interested in the same area of study was a recognition on the part of students and staff that to this critical mass of students could be applied a cohort of teachers dedicated to the magnet program the school was offering and the assembling of resources, equipment and facilities that would support the program in one school but likely be too diffused to support a similar program in many schools. The facilities and resources at Sudbury Secondary School were highlighted by many of the respondents as a prime example.

Respondents in all roles commented on the fact that schools with magnet programs were able to offer more options in the magnet area and did not feel a corresponding lack of choice in other areas outside the magnet programs such as third languages or social sciences.

As would be expected, students, parents and staff commented that in some (but not all) cases, the magnet program either added to the reputation of the school or changed the reputation. Again, Sudbury Secondary School was cited regularly as the best example of the latter having experienced a considerable advance in its reputation as a result of the Arts Education Program. Similarly, Lockerby was most commonly cited as the best example of a school whose reputation for high academic achievement continued due, in part, to STEP.

Students in particular commented that they felt that graduation from a school with a magnet program enhanced their position in terms of post-secondary placements both in their selected fields and in admission to a post-secondary institution generally. This was partially supported by teachers in the focus group who agreed that post-secondary placement was enhanced in the post-secondary arts programs of students from Sudbury Secondary School and for post-secondary programs in science and engineering for the STEP graduates.

The students saw access to transportation as an advantage. In the student focus groups for both schools with magnet programs and community schools most believed that transportation was an advantage, albeit somewhat inequitably applied, in that students attending a magnet program would receive transportation but would be required to make their own way to school (if they lived within the 1.6 km zone) if they chose to attend their community school. Most did say that they would like transportation to be supplied regardless of the circumstances.

Finally, all groups recognized the advantage to a school with a magnet program of having a significantly large cohort of highly motivated learners readily assuming leadership roles within the school. Lockerby Composite School was cited several times as an example of a school with an abundance of co-curricular and extra-curricular programs due, most felt, to a sizeable leadership group within the student body. Lockerby Composite School was praised for its highly successful and public campaign for cancer research. Its success in this and other areas was attributed by students and principals alike to a critical mass of student leaders in one building. Related to this was the feeling among students attending community schools that the lack of extra-curricular programs at their school was due, in part, to the absence of student leaders.

Introductory Comment on Finding #11

As would be expected, the advantages of having schools with magnet programs were framed in terms of the magnet programs as stand-alone institutions (increased system revenue aside) rather than as components of a larger system. This finding, then, must be considered in the context of the responses to the next question where the magnet programs were examined in the context of the system as a whole. Still, there was a significant level of support and understanding about the value of the magnet programs, per se, by a wide range of respondents.

Finding #11

Staff, students and school council chairs were generally supportive of the schools with magnet programs concept in the theoretical or generic sense seeing it as a way of offering school choice, bringing together critical masses of students, staff, equipment and resources to foster a high quality of education and involvement in a specific field that could not likely be duplicated. Increased revenue through attracting out-of-District students was also noted and appreciated.

Question #2: What are the disadvantages of having magnet programs in the system?

As was the case with Question #1, this question was posed to all groups and individuals. In all, interviewees and focus group participants identified seven disadvantages for having magnet schools.

The single greatest disadvantage identified by all staff and school council chairs not associated with schools with magnet programs was the cost of transportation. In virtually all these cases, what was perceived to be the cost (no respondent knew the exact figures) was high and resulted in their minds in taking away funding which could be used for additional teachers and other in-school personnel and for learning resources for all students. Most of those who expressed concern with the costs were adamant that transportation resulted in a system of great inequity as magnet programs were “artificially supported at the expense of the system at large.” Indeed, when it was raised during the interviews with community school staff and school council chairs there was a strong feeling that they would be prepared to reconsider the magnet concept in the interest of redeploying those funds to the system. This was true even for those who were positive about the presence of magnets in a general sense and could readily acknowledge their advantages.

Students as well pointed out some of the disadvantages with regard to transportation. They felt that bus times were often too long but the most pressing issue for them was what they believed to be an inequitable situation where community school students were, perhaps, required to walk longer distances in support of increased transportation costs associated with magnets. (Further review of transportation indicated students were not correct in this assertion, however).

Of secondary importance to this were the issues of school image and loss of enrolment. Staff and parents from the community schools felt strongly that their schools suffered by comparison with the perceived excellence of the schools with magnet programs and were concerned that this would continue to foster a flight away from the community schools and undermine both the in-school program (range of course offerings) and extra-curricular activities.

The principals (secondary community schools and elementary alike) pointed to the difficulties they were and would be having with a reduced enrolment. While this would not be evident in the Intermediate Division (Grades 9 and 10), where Ministry requirements resulted in a relatively standard set of courses across the system, it was, they felt, most evident in the senior grades (Grades 11 and 12) where options were more limited.

Many of the community schools currently address the problem through scheduling offerings over a cycle of two to three years to give students legitimate choices or by offering multi-pathway (college and university pathways) courses or by combining grades. The community school principals commented that staff, while dedicated to their own school, would naturally be attracted to a school where the enrolment might well allow a teacher to teach a full teaching load in his/her discipline. In the end, principals felt that the presence of schools with magnet programs created a climate of competitiveness for student enrolment and, less so, for teachers of high skill and reputation.

It is interesting to note, however, that the students from the community schools, while acknowledging that they felt there were more options at the schools with magnet programs, did not feel restricted in the course

selection that was available to them in their schools. No student reported being forced into a credit he/she did not want. Similarly, when school council chairs from the community schools were asked if their children, some of whom had graduated, had been excessively restricted in their choices, they responded that they had not.

Related to this was the belief that while community schools felt they suffered in terms of reputation across the District, students, staff and parents alike felt strongly that their community schools were “good schools” and they were serving students and parents well. The question of reputation, then, appears to be more perceived than real and further suggests that if more were done to address the image of community schools, the system would be less restive.

Despite the general belief among community school students, staff and parents that these schools were “good schools” all groups noted that the absence of a strong student leadership cadre at the community schools resulted in less involvement in extra-curricular activities. The students concurred with this and pointed out that this resulted in a heavier load on the leaders left in the community schools to foster school spirit and to ensure viable extra-curricular activities were in place for all students.

While parents and staff did not comment on the rigour of the schools with magnet programs (with the exception of a few comments on the demands of the I.B. Program) most students at the schools with magnet programs were quick to point out that the expectations for learning at these schools were, in some cases, excessive. As one student perceptively commented: “There is a fine line between expectations and pressure.” This was noted by the students in the magnet programs but not by students in the regular program within the schools with magnet programs. (The comments on the pressure associated with the I.B. Program came from students outside Lo-Ellen Park but from both community and other schools with magnet programs.)

Another disadvantage seen by both staff and students was the impact of selecting magnet courses on the French Immersion program. Some principals of both schools with magnet programs and community schools felt that, when the choice came to continuing in a magnet program or selecting courses that would lead to a French Immersion Certificate, the choice was often made in favour of the magnet option when no similar option was offered with French as the language of instruction. This was clearly an issue for some respondents who felt strongly the need to do all that was necessary to support the existence of the French language through the system’s offerings.

It should be noted, however, that this perception is in direct contrast, as show above, to the perception of community school students and parents. They saw their school as “good schools” and did not see a two-tiered system in any guise in the RDSB.

Introductory Comment on Findings #12, 13 and 14

As noted above, the schools with magnet programs were seen as offering advantages when the concept was looked at in isolation but, when being assessed in terms of the effects on the system at large, disadvantages were clearly put forward. It is a tribute to the professionalism of the staff and the commitment of parents that they were often able to see both sides of the debate though their preferences were clear. In the end, the disadvantages were expressed in terms of equity, cost savings and public perceptions.

Finding #12

Transportation and costs to support the magnet programs were seen as the most distinct disadvantage of having magnet programs in the system.

Finding #13

The next two most pressing disadvantages were cited as the loss of reputation to the community schools as effective alternatives and the reduced program offerings in the face of a smaller student body.

Finding #14

Of lesser importance were the impact of the magnet programs on French Immersion programs, a reduced student leadership capacity in the community schools and a feeling that the current magnet programs were somewhat protected.

Question #3: Of the four magnets that currently exist in the system, is there any one you feel has the best “draw” among them? If so, which one? Why do you think that this is the case?

This question was asked of the teachers, principals and school council chairs. As shown by the enrolment figures in Table 1 of this report, Lockerby Composite School has the largest magnet program followed by the Arts Education Program at Sudbury Secondary School, the International Baccalaureate Program at Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School and the Integrated Technology Program at Lively District Secondary School. What is as important as the numbers, however, is the reason why people see one or the other as the most appealing alternative to a community school or to the other magnet programs.

Almost universally among the respondents, the answer to the “best draw” was STEP at Lockerby Composite School. Many of the respondents were quick to point out, however, that they felt that the allure of Lockerby Composite School was as much due to its reputation as a school of high academic standing as it was to STEP per se.

Several respondents pointed to a very effective public relations campaign on the part of the school which included billboard advertising and a recent segment on a local news channel highlighting activities. Of particular note was the annual campaign for cancer research which was cited by several respondents as well as being mentioned in two of the student focus groups.

One respondent commented that the public relations budget at Lockerby Composite School was much higher than at other schools and speculated that it was, in part, due to the fact that the school council at Lockerby Composite School was liberal in funding the school for this purpose. When asked about school council donations, Lockerby Composite School officials confirmed that no funds came to the school from the council for this purpose.

As noted in Finding #1, there is a great variability in the materials used to advertise the magnet programs. Lockerby Composite School stands out as having the most sophisticated set of materials that are presented to students and parents interested in enrolling in the school.

It was in response to this question that several principals raised the issue of what one principal called “the triumph of style over substance.” While acknowledging the high quality of the program at Lockerby Composite School, several principals felt strongly that STEP really should not be seen as the kind of innovative option that it once was. Noting that the program was now in its 23rd year, several respondents commented that the integration of technology into teaching and learning which was once rather unique at Lockerby is simply now a fact of life at most secondary (and elementary) schools. One of the principals noted, for instance, that there is a similar emphasis on the integration of technology in the magnet program at Lively District Secondary School in particular but pointed out that this goes largely unnoticed. Those same respondents also commented that the Science courses at Lockerby Composite School which were directed at forensics and health care for instance were not substantially different from the Senior Biology and Chemistry options available at all other secondary schools in the system.

Despite some skepticism about the form and content of STEP, however, most respondents acknowledged that Lockerby Composite School had done a commendable job in presenting itself as a school for high achievers who enjoy a very active co-curricular program based on a high level of student involvement and parental support.

Arts Education at Sudbury Secondary School was seen as the next highest draw but for different reasons. Very few of the respondents commented on the present academic reputation of the school except to note that its reputation had changed substantially over the years from a school which served a high needs population to a reputable institution whose magnet program served the needs of a special population. It was generally acknowledged even by those who expressed concern over the existence of the magnet programs that Arts Education was a legitimate alternative.

Introductory Comment on Findings #15 and 16

Whether the curriculum or method of instruction at Lockerby Composite School are less different than what promotional material would make it appear, the effective marketing of a school with a magnet program by its staff, students and parents is an essential task in any system competing internally and externally for students. In this regard, the label of “the best draw” for the magnet program at Lockerby Composite School is also a comment on the foresight of the school in supporting its status as a viable alternative to other schools and programs.

There was no similar questioning of the Arts Education Program at Sudbury Secondary School which was seen as being a legitimately different program for a certain percentage of the population. Sudbury Secondary School, like Lockerby Composite School, does an admirable job in presenting itself and in doing so, makes its differences apparent to all.

Finding #15

Lockerby Composite School is seen by parents and many staff at both schools with magnet programs and community schools as having the best “draw” in the Rainbow District School Board despite the perception that STEP may no longer represent a substantially different program in terms of method of instruction or content.

Finding #16

Arts Education is also seen as a successful draw but its appeal, unlike Lockerby Composite School, is deemed to be based on the substantial difference in its offerings which underscores the legitimacy of its reputation as a genuine alternative in terms of the content of the program. This is, of course, enhanced by the acknowledgment that the facilities which support Arts Education cannot currently be duplicated in any other Rainbow District School Board secondary school.

Question #4: Of the four magnets that currently exist in the system, is there any one you feel has the weakest “draw” among them? If so, which one? Why do you think that this is the case?

Without any equivocation, most respondents indicated that the Integrated Technology Program at Lively District Secondary School had the weakest draw. There was a high level of consistency among the respondents that this was due to several factors, some of which had nothing to do with the reputation of the school as a whole.

The most prominent response was location. Students and staff alike commented that Lively District Secondary School was seen to be too far out of the core of Sudbury proper. One student noted that it was common for students to see Lively District Secondary School as geographically more isolated despite the fact that those same students and parents were prepared to support attendance at a magnet that was even farther away from their place of residence than the magnet program at Lively. As one student said: “People are willing to go into the city for a magnet program but not willing to go out of it.”

The second most prominent response was a lack of understanding of both the Integrated Technology Program and the student group for which it was intended. Even some secondary principals noted that they “really didn’t know enough about the program to comment”. This statement was confirmed by teachers in the focus group who said it was the least known of the magnet programs.

An interesting sub-set of this was the confusion expressed by some elementary and secondary principals who were clearly not sure of the target group for the Integrated Technology Program at Lively District Secondary School. One commented that the standards appeared to be too high and that he/she was not able to assist in the acceptance of a student whom the principal felt the program was really intended for. Another said the program was seen for low achievers only and did not feel high achievers would be accepted.

To some extent, this may be due to the lack of advertising for the program. Certainly Lively District Secondary School stands out among the four magnet programs as the least aggressive in its marketing.

Introductory Comment on Finding #17

Offering as it does a magnet program option for students going to college or to the world of work, Lively District Secondary School's magnet program represents a unique option (within the District and, to some extent, within the province) for a population that would be well served by its Integrated Technology Program. Its value is undermined by challenges due to location and by the lack of understanding about the very real advantages such a program has for a group of students who are traditionally not as well served in the province in terms of magnet options.

Finding #17

The Integrated Technology Program at Lively District Secondary School is seen as the magnet program with the least drawing power. Challenges due to location, lack of understanding about the nature of the program and the nature of the marketing plan affect its reputation as a viable option.

Question #5: Suppose the magnet school concept itself was not under review at this time, that magnets were a fact of life in the system. Does the Rainbow District School Board “have it right” with the current four programs? Are there any programs that you would add to the four in existence in the system? Are there any that you would delete from the four in existence in the system?

This question was addressed in the interviews with staff and school council chairs and was discussed within the focus groups under the question of what changes people would suggest if a) schools with magnet programs were not under review as a concept and b) if other magnet programs could be added or could replace existing options.

To aid in the discussion, interviewees and participants were given orally a set of other possibilities for magnet programs. These included magnet programs for high performance athletes, ELK-12 schools, ELK-12 all girls’ schools, ELK-12 all boys’ schools, international languages and business administration.

The most common suggestions for additions were: a) a school for high performance athletes and b) a general possibility that all schools could be given some form of magnet option (undefined at this point) in order to allow all secondary schools to, as one focus group member said, “put everyone on a level playing field.”

Among the principals, the most common deletion was the STEP option at Lockerby Composite School for reasons stated above that STEP no longer represented anything substantially different from what was being offered in most schools across the province. The second possibility was the fusion of STEP and the I.B. Program into one school. As will be shown below, this may be due as much to concern about the relative proximity of the programs in the southern part of the city rather than about program issues per se.

There was clearly no enthusiasm for closing the Arts Education Program at Sudbury Secondary School. As one principal stated: “Arts Education is an option we can all live with.” Lively District Secondary School was again cited as one whose magnet program could be eliminated but most of those who made the suggestion acknowledged what was noted above: Because of a lack of real understanding of the Integrated Technology Program, they were careful to say that this recommendation should be examined with caution.

Introductory Comment on Finding #18

As noted above, schools with magnet programs remain a complicated issue among educators and parents alike so when faced with a question of addition, reduction (but not eradication) or replacement, respondents were guarded in their comments. This was true for both supporters and detractors of the magnet school option. In both cases, the addition of magnet programs was likely seen as threatening because of impact on enrolment in all schools and because of additional transportation costs.

Finding #18

There was little enthusiasm for expanding or replacing magnet options.

During the debate on the above question with interviewees and within the focus groups, a related issue arose that was discussed at some length. Most participants recognized that the magnet programs had been introduced to the system in a relatively informal way through, as noted earlier, the efforts of a principal and staff.

The educators were asked how they would feel about the development of a kind of master plan or at least a formal process to rationalize program offerings in and among secondary schools. Almost all the principals commented that such a process would have helped in the past when the magnet programs were established and would be of use in the future.

Introductory Comment on Finding #19

As was the case in 1998-2000, districts in Ontario are now being told by the Ministry that school closures will be a fact of life in the province as a way to reduce surplus space in light of declining enrolment and achieve savings. In the few growing districts in the province, the opening of a new secondary school is usually a prelude to an extended debate at the board and senior staff levels on the nature of the program at the new school.

Opening and closing schools too often is simply based on concerns over enrolment first and program second. It may be very advantageous for school districts to have a sound plan for program rationalization or, at least, a formal process that is well understood to put forward a program option. There should a clear set of statements on the effect the placement of a program would have on other schools in the district as a whole.

Finding # 19

There was a fairly consistent level of support among educators for the development of a centralized plan to rationalize program decisions in secondary schools. The addition, reduction or replacement of magnet programs could be part of such a plan.

Question #6: Are the magnet schools as presently located in the right buildings in terms of geographic location and school facilities? Why or why not?

In responding to this question, staff, school council chairs and students were in general agreement about two points. Students did not comment on the third.

The first pertained to the location of a magnet program at Lively District Secondary School. Despite the fact that Lively District Secondary School is actually at the geographic centre of the Rainbow District School Board, most felt that whatever magnet program was placed at Lively District Secondary School would struggle to survive. This in no way reflected on the quality of the current program but rather on the location which was consistently seen as “too far out” which meant too far out of Sudbury proper.

The second point to which all agreed was the placement of the Arts Education Program at Sudbury Secondary School. Virtually all respondents and focus group participants were universal in their praise of the new facilities at Sudbury Secondary and recognized that, on the basis of facilities alone, the program was in the best location. In addition most commented that the presence of the magnet program there had done a great deal to enhance the image of the school. Finally, placed at it is in the centre of the city, it is seen as an ideal location for the Sudbury schools in particular to access the facilities (most particularly the fine auditorium) for shows, graduations and concerts.

The third item was mentioned by a large number of staff in both interviews and focus groups. It was the close proximity of magnet programs at Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School and at Lockerby Composite School and thus preferential treatment given to the southern section of the city by virtue of the presence of these two magnets. Several of those who felt strongly about this noted that both programs, but most particularly the I.B. Program, could be accommodated in any other school because it required no special facilities. To some extent, others pointed out, the same was true of STEP. A small number of respondents suggested that both STEP and I.B. could be accommodated in a single school.

Introductory Comment on Finding #20

In many districts across the province and country, magnet programs, when they are the results of an individual school’s initiative, are placed in schools because of a loss of enrolment. For many of these, there is a lack of careful examination of placement of the programs for the district as a whole. This usually results in a concern, after the fact, that the placements have served the needs of the individual school well enough but have generated a problem for the system overall.

Finding #20

The magnet program at Lively District Secondary School is not in an ideal location due to its distance from the centre of the city. Concern exists in terms of equity about the south end of the city being served by two magnet programs in such close proximity.

Other Areas:

(1) Presentations to Students and Parents

With regard to presentations made to Grade 8 students, principals confirmed that all secondary schools were involved in a system-wide evening where parents were given information on secondary school programs. There was a high level of acceptance for this practice and all principals reported that they felt their school had an equal opportunity to showcase their programs. Almost all secondary principals confirmed that they believed the schools with magnet programs were given no additional resources to present themselves at this meeting or at other in-school sessions. The elementary principals were supportive of this view commenting that presentations to Grade 8 students by schools with magnet programs and community schools were characterized by professionalism with each school presenting its program objectively and with no attempt to discredit any other option in the process.

(2) Staff Recruitment

When asked about whether principals at schools with magnet programs made overt or covert attempts to attract certain staff members to their schools, virtually all secondary principals commented upon the professionalism and collegiality that were present among the secondary principals. While they acknowledged that they were in competition for students, interested in assembling the best quality staff and looking after the interests of their own schools, they felt confident that they could count on their colleagues to respect the staffing process and let enrolment, the collective agreement and staff choice govern the movement of teachers.

Principals of community schools did point out, however, that it was inevitable that some staff would move to schools with larger populations where they would have more opportunity to teach all assigned classes in their subject area. That did give the schools with magnet programs some advantage in the staffing process they felt.

(3) Removal of the Magnet Programs and Resulting Effect on the Quality of the System

As would be expected, there was a range of responses to the question of the possible effect of the removal of magnet programs from the system. A minority of the respondents said there would be no change. Those who were not supportive of magnet programs said that the system would be disrupted for a short period but that ultimately it would be better as a whole for reasons of equity and for the savings from transportation which would affect all schools positively. The supporters of schools with magnet programs have created a very strong program to meet student needs and the disappearance of these would reduce program options and choice.

(4) Final Comments on the School with Magnet Programs Option

Principals and school council chairs were asked to make a final comment on schools with magnet programs. Listed below are some representative comments:

- Magnet schools do not look at the needs of individual students. [The decision] to establish magnets is political and economic.
- Kids shouldn't have to shop around after Grade 8.
- Magnets have a real value. They provide differentiated opportunities for students.
- Magnets create a negative atmosphere of competition. Are we looking at kids or looking at programs?
- The time has come to make a change. We need to look at costs, equity, elitism and access to programs.
- There is value in the magnet programs. They should be maintained at all costs.
- Kill the transportation allocation but don't take parental choice away.
- The arts magnet to me is the one that makes the most sense. We will see benefits from the resources that have been put into this school.
- We must look at the large picture. We must look at the best way of offering the best opportunities. These school [magnets] are specialty schools, not elitist schools. They represent an option.

Introductory Comment on Finding #21

Clearly staff, students and parents alike have strong opinions on the place of schools with magnet programs in the system and, depending on their personal positions as being associated with a school with a magnet program or community school, are equally supportive or critical.

Finding #21

Schools with magnet programs are a complicated issue in the Rainbow District School Board and any decision to alter their status will be supported or not by the educational community at large. Practices in the District and the professionalism of the principals and staff serve to ensure that the presence of magnet programs is managed with a degree of equanimity that is commendable.

SECTION 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the information gathered and the findings generated by the information, this report includes seven recommendations. In each case, the recommendation is accompanied by a rationale.

1. It is recommended that:

The current four magnet programs remain in place as program options in the Rainbow District School Board.

Rationale:

There is no question that the presence of schools with magnet programs in the Rainbow District School Board is a matter of some debate. As noted in "Section 4", principals and school council chairs are equally passionate on both sides of the issue. While community school supporters applaud the idea of schools with magnet programs in the general sense, they are critical about the implications for their home schools in terms of reduced enrolment, fewer program offerings, reduced leadership capacity among students and the impact of drawing perceived higher achieving students away on school reputation in the community schools. Above all, they are critical of funding that is used for transportation to the schools with magnet programs.

On the other hand, the Rainbow District School Board is justifiably proud of its schools with magnet programs which have given students in the District as well as students from outside the District a genuine choice in program. The four schools that have the benefit of housing the programs have seen their reputations increase as a result of the magnet programs. Student performance levels are generally higher at the schools with magnet programs and the retention rates in those programs are also high, suggesting a strong level of satisfaction with their choices. The student testimonials that are included in the appendices in this report are, perhaps, the strongest endorsements for maintaining schools with magnet programs in the system. They reflect the comments from a cross section of principals, teachers, and school council chairs.

On the more pragmatic side is the question of increased revenue to the system as a whole. While a substantial amount is used to support transportation to schools with magnet programs, that cost is significantly offset and creating a surplus by the addition of revenue accompanying non-RDSB students enrolling in the system.

The other consideration is more speculative in nature. Having offered schools with magnet programs in some form over roughly the last 25 years, the RDSB has managed to attract students from other systems. Any decision by the District to discontinue its magnet program options would open the field to other educational jurisdictions establishing schools with magnet programs of their own and begin to attract students from the RDSB, a significant problem for a district that is already facing declining enrolment. As noted throughout this report, the presence of schools with magnet programs is not without its issues, but the many advantages suggest that schools with magnet programs should remain in some form (program and placement aside) in the Rainbow District School Board for the foreseeable future.

2. It is recommended that:

The transportation to the schools with magnet programs be retained but with stricter oversight on its application.

Rationale:

Transportation, as stated earlier, is the single most divisive issue pertaining to the schools with magnet programs in the District.

Those who speak against support for magnet programs in this regard firmly believe that the transportation is taking away resources from students across the system. As shown in "Section 4," however, the increased enrolment generated by schools with magnet programs helps to significantly offset the cost of transportation and, in fact, creates a surplus.

Even if that were not the case, the simple truth is that the magnet programs could not survive without the provision of transportation due to geography. The jurisdiction has one large urban centre with many sizeable communities outside the centre which cannot support their own secondary schools. The magnet programs, therefore, must rely on populations from outside Sudbury proper to support their existence. Further, while many parents may be prepared to drive their children to the school with a magnet program, many others would not have the means to do so. In addressing what is seen as an inequity by some in providing transportation, the decision to remove transportation would create inequities of another kind.

In maintaining the transportation for students in the magnet programs, the RDSB would be well served by making certain the community at large and even its own school-level administrators are fully aware of the benefits of increased enrolments to the budget as a whole even with transportation. Those figures alone would do much to address, if not satisfy totally, the concerns of the community.

All principals are generally supportive of the practice that students should not be required to change schools once they are established in the school but decide to drop out of a magnet program. On the other hand, there is a feeling among staff that not all schools with magnet programs are as assiduous as they should be in removing out-of-attendance-area students from transportation once they have left the magnet program. Transportation personnel or the superintendents assigned to the schools could, perhaps, be designated to ensure that all schools with magnet programs abide by this RDSB practice.

3. It is recommended that:

The community schools receive additional resources in the form of compensatory options that could, in part, be supported by the extra revenues generated by out-of-system student enrolment

Rationale:

Approximately one third of the students in the magnet programs come from other community schools in the Rainbow District School Board. As noted, this creates challenges for the community schools with program viability particularly in the Senior Division, with timetabling and with teaching assignments.

Transportation is seen as a massive support to the schools with magnet programs. In fairness to the community schools, staff and school council chairs see no similar support to the community schools who have to live with the effects of that decision.

The budget should be examined with a view to the development of a budget designed to support compensatory options in the community schools. This could include additional resources, small capital expenditures, money for a more sophisticated campaign to attract and keep local students in the home school or, most important, additional staff to support program.

Additional funding of compensatory options is not new in the Ontario school system. Many districts have needs indexes which identify schools with high needs and use those data to supply additional funding for staffing and professional learning.

Should it wish to pursue the establishment of this practice, the RDSB could consider two options. It could mandate how the money could be spent within the community schools or it could give the principals more discretion in the spending as long as the principals address issues that are directly attributed to the effects of the magnet programs on their own schools. Whatever the practice, the availability of extra funding in the form of compensatory options would serve to reduce the perception that the magnet programs alone are being given special consideration.

4. It is recommended that:

All schools with magnet programs be required to review their mandates and develop a set of core beliefs or guiding principles, a clear mission statement, aims, objectives written in terms of student learning outcomes and more detailed explanations of admission requirements, processes for admission, and standards for remaining in the magnet program.

Rationale:

This recommendation is both a stand-alone recommendation and a prelude to the next one. As noted in the findings, there is variability among the various magnet programs in terms of the quality of information that explains the function and form of the programs. In order to make informed decisions, community members need to have very clear statements of what the program intends to do, what the admission standards are, how a student applies to the program, how the student's status is maintained and what the student receives when the program is successfully completed.

While most of these are in place in most magnet programs in some fashion, they require significantly more refinement and standardization. Of particular importance is the need to clarify the purposes of the program in terms of student learning outcomes. In many cases, the materials describe what students are required to *do* rather than what they are required to *learn*. In addition, some of the descriptions of the admission requirements are very general in nature as is the information about what students must achieve to remain in the program.

This lack of clarity was in evidence in conversations with staff from the community schools who were not certain how rigidly the schools with magnet programs enforced both the admission standards and the standards for remaining in the program. In addition, as mentioned in "Section 4", many staff who should have known were quite confused about the nature of the student group for whom the magnet was intended.

Some degree of standardization among the magnet programs would also help parents and students make more informed choices as the information presented in one program would mirror in form the information in another. That is not to say that schools should not be given the latitude they may need to present their programs but some framework for an explanation of the program would allow for easier comparison.

5. It is recommended that:

All schools with magnet programs be required to undergo a cyclical review of their magnet program to ensure the program is meeting its stated mission. This review could include both an internal team and an external team and be based on a school review model that is both efficient (minimal time and resources required) and effective (addresses the intended outcomes of the review).

Rationale:

It is not uncommon for organizations to lose both their vision and their inventiveness as time hardens practices and beliefs. Richard Daft, in one of his missives on organizations, referred to this phenomenon as “organizational atrophy.” The existence of the magnet programs is premised on the fact that the program is different from programs offered at regular community schools. That was not universally accepted by participants in this review. One of the criticisms of STEP from staff at other schools, for instance, was that it no longer differed substantially from the programs offered at other schools.

If schools with magnet programs are allowed to present their programs as qualitatively different from others, there should be some form of quality assurance that this is still the case. To that end, schools with magnet programs should be asked to undergo some form of cyclical review to ensure that they are meeting their mandate and they are offering a qualitatively different program. The frequency and scope of these reviews would need to be determined in the context of the time and effort required to carry them out but models already exist for doing so and in a fashion that would not result in a heavy burden to the school or to the system.

That is why a clarification of the mandate referenced in Recommendation # 6 is vitally important. Unless the program is firmly grounded in a set of beliefs and objectives focused on learning outcomes, for example, it would be almost impossible to measure effectiveness. If magnet programs really are different, they must gather the data to prove that this is, indeed, the case.

Finally, such a review would probably engender a spirit of change on the part of the staff to make continuous improvement a way of life at these specialized institutions.

6. It is recommended that:

When it is deemed necessary and appropriate, community schools should be provided with assistance from the Communications Office to help them in developing more proactive strategies to market their programs at a level that is consistent with the practices used in the schools with magnet programs.

Rationale:

The schools with magnet programs in general are obviously very successful at marketing their programs to the Rainbow community. Much can be learned from them. While some of the community schools rival their magnet counterparts in this regard, the success of the magnet programs, and Lockerby Composite School's in particular, may be due in part to its ongoing campaign to present themselves as a school of choice. Recommendation # 3 calls for “compensatory options” for the community schools. One of those options might be to use funds to help develop a more sophisticated communications plan aided by the Communications Office or, if funds are available, by outside agencies.

7. It is recommended that:

If all magnet programs remain in place, the segment of the magnet program currently located at Lively District Secondary School which addresses the needs of students in college, apprenticeship and workplace pathways be given additional support and be vigorously promoted.

Rationale:

This recommendation is unique in that it is focused on a single school. The uniqueness of the program at Lively District Secondary School, however, requires that it should be looked at in a unique way.

The Integrated Technology Program at Lively District Secondary School, in part, serves the students for whom the former vocational schools were intended. It also serves students who are college-bound and, in some cases, university-bound. Its uniqueness is due to the fact that this is a magnet program that addresses an audience that is substantially different from the ones served by most magnet programs.

The magnet program at Lively District Secondary School is facing significant challenges and is seen as the one with the least "draw." The reasons for this have been outlined earlier. Even with the challenges that it admittedly faces because of geography and a lack of real understanding of its form and purpose, the Integrated Technology Program deserves careful consideration and support.

Section 6: Summary

This review was undertaken in response to a Board motion asking for a review of magnet programs in the Rainbow District School Board.

The presence of magnet programs in the Rainbow District School Board has been a source of pride and consternation for the community. On the one hand, schools with magnet programs are seen as a way of giving parents and students the right to choose programs rather than simply being directed to community schools. They are also seen to have been one of the major reasons for school revitalization in terms of enrolment and reputation. Finally, the schools with magnet programs have attracted students from outside the District and thus have generated more funds as a whole for the RDSB that more than cover the transportation costs for the magnet programs.

On the other hand, their effect on the non-magnet or community schools has been a source of concern as staff and parents see the erosion of program options, the absence of a larger leadership cadre among students and a resultant decline in school reputation. The primary concern has been the transportation for the schools with magnet programs which is seen by many as artificially supporting the magnet program concept at the expense of resources that could be deployed to the system at large.

Further complicating the matter are two major factors. First, the declining enrolment in the District as a whole compounds the situation (the presence of schools with magnet programs) that in a larger and expanding system would go largely unnoticed. Second, the expansive geography of the Rainbow District School Board with its one large urban centre and its smaller surrounding towns makes the challenges of maintaining schools and programs more difficult than would be the case in districts of similar population but with a smaller geographical area.

Among the stated purpose of the review was a goal of giving senior staff a data-based report for informed decision-making. The data sources included both quantitative information supplied mostly by central office personnel and qualitative information gleaned from interviews with principals, school council chairs and focus groups with students and teachers. These data were analyzed through a process of triangulation to generate 21 findings or "statements of what is or what is perceived to be." The findings themselves were then used to generate seven recommendations or "statements of what should be." The recommendations range from those which are very general in scope to those which are directed at specific questions that were raised during the review.

The methodology employed in this review was based on the work of Dr. Fenwick English, a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The author of this report had the pleasure of working with Dr. English on reviews in New York, Texas, South Carolina, Iowa and Arizona.

One of the principles espoused by Dr. English is his "principle of doability." He firmly believes that the task of the reviewer is to present through the findings, and most particularly through the recommendations, suggestions that one can reasonably assume could be implemented. In keeping with this maxim, then, the recommendations were constructed in such a way as to acknowledge the limitations in resources in Ontario school districts at the present time and to respect as well the traditions, practices and cultural norms that make up the Rainbow District School Board and the community it serves.

SECTION 7

APPENDICES

Letter to Secondary School Principals

Dear (Name of Principal),

As you know, the Rainbow District School Board is undertaking a review of its magnet programs. We are gathering information from a number of sources including paper (enrolment figures, transportation costs, program booklets). As always, some of the best information comes from the people directly involved – principals, teachers, students and school council chairs.

So you won't be taken by surprise, I have attached a series of questions I'd like to ask you. I am going to ask you to think about the issues from the perspective of your own school right now and from the perspective of a system principal looking at the District as a whole. I understand those perspectives might yield quite different responses. At the end of the interview (about 90 minutes) I am going to ask you for any other thoughts that have not come up in response to my questions.

I would ask that you be as candid as possible. For my part, in writing the report I may use what I call "quotable quotes" which come from our discussion but I shall not identify the particular sources, using only terms like "a secondary principal." If there are quotes that could be traced to an individual I shall not use them. No one but I shall have access to these interview notes and, when the final report is submitted, I shall destroy those notes. In short, I shall adhere strictly to practices that protect confidentiality.

I am looking forward to working in Rainbow again and to meeting with you. I shall be in touch shortly.

Kindest regards,

Questions for Secondary School Principals

1. From a system perspective, what do you see as the advantages/disadvantages of having magnet programs in Rainbow?
2. Of the four magnets that exist, is there any one of the four that you feel has the best “draw” among them? If so, which one? Why do you think that this is the case?
3. Of the four magnets that exist, is there any one of the four that you feel has the weakest “draw” among them. If so, which one? Why do you think that is the case?
4. Again from a system perspective, suppose that the magnet program concept itself was not under review at this time i.e. that magnets were a fact of life in the system, does Rainbow “have it right” with the current four programs? Are there any programs that you would add to the four in existence in the system? Are there any you would delete from the four in existence in the system?
5. What are the effects of the existence of the magnet programs in your school on:
 - a. Your enrolment
 - b. The make-up of your student body
 - c. The make-up of your staff
 - d. Your school’s reputation in the community at large
 - e. The variety of course offerings

Please cite any data that you have in your own school that would support your opinions in each of the above.

6. Are the magnet programs located in the right buildings both in terms of geographic location and school facilities?
7. Do you think there is a “draw” on staff in the system to the various magnet programs?
8. In your estimation are there any practices or procedures in place in the system that are designed to give extra support to the magnets beyond simply offering a particular cluster of offerings i.e. extra transportation, budget and staffing considerations etc.
9. If the magnet programs were taken away tomorrow from the District, would the system be a) better b) worse c) the same, in terms of the overall quality of education that the District offers?
10. If you had one last comment to make on the presence of the schools with magnet programs in the system what would it be?

Letter to Elementary School Principals

Dear (Name of Principal),

As you know, the Rainbow District School Board is undertaking a review of its magnet programs. We are gathering information from a number of sources including paper (enrolment figures, transportation costs, and program booklets). As always, some of the best information comes from the people directly involved – principals, teachers, students and school council chairs.

In our planning sessions we discussed data sources and we felt strongly that some representation from the elementary panel should be in evidence because of your unique perspective of looking at what your Grade 8 graduates should have open to them by way of program options. Senior staff identified your school as one of the three I should consider.

So you won't be taken by surprise, I have attached a series of questions I'd like to ask you. I am going to ask you to think about the issues from the perspective of your own school right now and from the perspective of a system principal looking at the District as a whole. I understand those perspectives might yield quite different responses. At the end of the interview (about 90 minutes) I am going to ask you for any other thoughts that have not come up in response to my questions.

I would ask that you be as candid as possible. For my part, in writing the report I may use what I call "quotable quotes" which come from our discussion but I shall not identify the particular sources, using only terms like "an elementary principal." If there are quotes that could be traced to an individual I shall not use them. No one but I shall have access to these interview notes and, when the final report is submitted, I shall destroy those notes. In short, I shall adhere strictly to practices that protect confidentiality.

I am looking forward to working in Rainbow again and to meeting with you. I shall be in touch shortly.

Kindest regards,

Questions for Elementary School Principals

1. From a system perspective, what do you see as the advantages/disadvantages of having magnet programs in Rainbow?
2. Of the four magnets that exist, is there any one of the four that you feel has the best “draw” among them? If so, which one? Why do you think that this is the case?
3. Of the four magnets that exist, is there any one of the four that you feel has the weakest “draw” among them. If so, which one? Why do you think that is the case?
4. Again from a system perspective, suppose that the magnet program concept itself was not under review at this time i.e. that magnets were a fact of life in the system, does Rainbow “have it right” with the current four programs? Are there any programs that you would add to the four in existence in the system? Are there any you would delete from the four in existence in the system?
5. Are the magnet programs located in the right buildings both in terms of geographic location and school facilities? Why or why not?
6. Do the schools with magnet programs come to your school directly to “make a pitch” for attending them rather than attending the student’s community (designated) school? Are the presentations made to a) students only b) parents only c) students and parents in a single session?
7. Is there a difference in quality and quantity in terms of the materials and information the magnets deliver at these sessions in comparison to the materials delivered by the community school representatives? Do you feel that the non-magnet schools do enough to present themselves as a viable alternative to the schools with magnet programs?
8. From your perspective, what aspects of the magnet school program appeal most to a) parents and b) students?
9. From the perspective of a principal of Grade 8 graduates, do you see the magnet program as narrowing possibilities for your graduates or as enriching the secondary experience? Please elaborate.
10. If the magnet programs were taken away tomorrow from the District, would the system be a) better b) worse c) the same in terms of the overall quality of education that the District offers?
11. If you have one last comment to make on the presence of schools with magnet programs in the system, what would it be?

Letter to School Council Chairs

Dear (School Council Chair),

As you know, the Rainbow District School Board is undertaking a review of its magnet programs. We are gathering information from a number of sources including paper (enrolment figures, transportation costs, and program booklets). As always, some of the best information comes from the people directly involved – principals, teachers, students and school council chairs.

In our planning sessions we discussed data sources and we felt strongly that some representation from school councils from both schools with magnet programs and schools without magnet programs should be in evidence because of your unique perspective. Senior staff identified your school as one of the four we should consider.

So you won't be taken by surprise, I have attached a series of questions I'd like to ask you. I am asking you to think about these questions from the perspective of a parent looking at the RDSB as a whole but also from the perspective of your own school. At the end of the interview (about one hour) I am going to ask you for any other thoughts that may not have come up in response to my questions.

I would ask that you be as candid as possible. For my part, in writing the report I may use what I call "quotable quotes" which come from our discussion but I shall not identify the particular sources, using only terms like "a school council member." If there are quotes that could be traced to an individual I shall not use them. No one but I shall have access to these interview notes and, when the final report is submitted, I shall destroy those notes. In short, I shall adhere strictly to practices that protect confidentiality.

I am looking forward to working in Rainbow again and to meeting with you. I shall be in touch shortly.

Kindest regards,

Questions for School Council Chairs

1. From a system perspective, what do you see as the advantages/disadvantages of having schools with magnet programs in Rainbow?
2. Of the four magnets that exist, is there any one of the four that you feel has the best “draw” among them? If so, which one? Why do you think that this is the case?
3. Of the four magnets that exist, is there any one of the four that you feel has the weakest “draw” among them. If so, which one? Why do you think that is the case?
4. Again from a system perspective, suppose that the magnet program concept itself was not under review at this time i.e. that magnets were a fact of life in the system, does Rainbow “have it right” with the current four programs? Are there any programs that you would add to the four in existence in the system? Are there any you would delete from the four in existence in the system?
5. Are the schools with magnet programs as presently located in the right buildings both in terms of geographic location and school facilities? Why or why not?
6. What are the advantages/disadvantages to your particular school of having magnet programs in the RDSB?
7. From the perspective of a parent do you see the magnet program as narrowing possibilities for your children or as enriching the secondary experience? Please elaborate.
8. If the magnet programs were taken away tomorrow from the District, would the system be a) better, b) worse, c) the same in terms of the overall quality of education that the District offers?
9. If you have one last comment to make on the presence of schools with magnet programs in the system, what would it be?

Letter to Focus Group Participants (Students)

Dear (Name of Student),

The Rainbow District School Board is undertaking a review of its magnet programs in its secondary schools and I have been asked by your District to conduct this review. We very much value the opinion of students and that is why I am contacting you directly. You have been identified by your principal as a student representative to participate in one of our student focus groups. The focus group will take place on (Date) at your school. It will take about an hour.

The focus group will be looking at the advantages and disadvantages of having the four schools with magnet programs (Lo-Ellen Park, Lockerby, Sudbury Secondary and Lively) in the Rainbow District School Board and what effect it has on you and your fellow students. You will be in a group of six to eight students who are in the same program as you are (either magnet or non-magnet). I shall act as the facilitator for the group.

You do not have to do any preparation for the session except, perhaps, chat with your fellow students about what they think of the magnet program. We take all opinions!

I am looking forward to meeting with you on (Date).

Kindest regards,

The Individual Task

1. Please take about 10 minutes to think about the issues surrounding the offering of magnet programs in the Rainbow District School Board. Given your current position (in a magnet or non-magnet) it may be difficult to see both sides of the issue, but I'd like you to try.
2. The questions I would like you to address are:
 - a. What are the advantages in having schools with magnet programs as an option in the Rainbow District School Board?
 - b. What are the disadvantages of having schools with magnet programs as an option?
 - c. If I could make changes surrounding the schools with magnet programs (change focus, change location, add a program or programs, take away a program or program), what would those changes be?

The Group Task

1. Once you have completed the individual task, I am going to try to have you come up with a minimum of three and maximum of five consensus statements for each one of these questions. I shall act as a facilitator for the consensus exercise.

N.B. Answer sheets have been provided for the individual tasks/questions.

At the end of the session, I'll ask you to turn in your booklet to me.

Thanks,

Letter to Focus Group Participants (Teachers)

Dear (Name of Teacher Participant),

As you know, the Rainbow District School Board is undertaking a review of its magnet programs. We are gathering information from a number of sources including paper (enrolment figures, transportation costs, program booklets). As always, some of the best information comes from the people directly involved – principals, teachers, students and school council chairs.

For teachers, we are going to use a single heterogeneous focus group made up of eight teachers, four from non-magnet schools and four from schools with magnet programs. I have asked that we have one Guidance counsellor from a magnet and non-magnet to be part of the group. The session should take about three hours. The scheduled date and time is Friday, November 21, 2014 and will take place at Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School.

The form of the session will be as follows:

- Overview of the Review – Form and Purpose (10 minutes)
- Individual Task (10 minutes)
- Group Consensus Exercise (1 hour and 40 minutes)

I shall serve as the facilitator. You need not do preparation in advance except perhaps to chat with colleagues in your school informally about the advantages and disadvantages of having magnet programs in Rainbow, whether the magnets highlight the best program options and whether or not they are in the best locations. I would ask that you be as candid as possible in the discussion.

For my part, in writing the report I may use what I call “quotable quotes” which come from our discussion but I shall not identify the particular sources, using only terms like “focus group participant.” If there are quotes that could be traced to an individual I shall not use them. No one but I shall have access to the focus group notes and, when the final report is submitted, I shall destroy those notes. In short, I shall adhere strictly to practices that protect confidentiality.

Thank you for agreeing to be a participant. I hope you find it to be an interesting experience. I am looking forward to meeting with you.

Kindest regards,

The Individual Task

1. Please take about 10-15 minutes to think about the issues surrounding the offering of magnet programs in the Rainbow District School Board. Given your current position (in a magnet or non-magnet) it may be difficult to see both sides of the issue, but I'd like you to try.
2. The questions I would like you to address are:
 - a. What are the advantages in having schools with magnet programs as an option in the Rainbow District School Board?
 - b. What are the disadvantages of having schools with magnet programs as an option?
 - c. If I could make changes surrounding the schools with magnet programs (change focus, change location, add a program or programs, take away a program or program), what would those changes be?

The Group Task

1. Once you have completed the individual task, I am going to try to have you come up with a minimum of three and maximum of five consensus statements for each one of these questions. I shall act as a facilitator for the consensus exercise.

N.B. Answer sheets have been provided for the individual tasks/questions.

At the end of the session, I'll ask you to turn in your booklet to me.

Thanks,

List of Findings

1. Variability exists among the materials used to advertise the magnet programs in terms of the level of sophistication in presentation. Some discrepancies exist between the materials presented in hard copy and school websites.
2. Online and hard copy descriptions of the magnet programs are designed to be helpful to students and parents. Program objectives, however, are not clearly articulated in terms of student learning outcomes which could prove more useful in evaluating the degree to which the program is meeting its objectives.
3. Schools with magnet programs generally score higher on EQAO assessments than community schools. The results in Grade 9 Applied Mathematics showed a steady improvement from 2010 to 2013.
4. In most cases, students in magnet programs are achieving credits at a higher rate than is the case in community schools. Community schools are showing greater improvement rates in Grade 10 results in particular.
5. The presence of schools with magnet programs in the District attracts non-RDSB students to come into the system thereby generating a substantial increase in grants for the RDSB that exceed all costs for the programs including transportation.
6. The high retention rate in existing magnet programs will create a challenge for community schools.
7. The revenues generated by the increased enrolment in the RDSB’s magnet programs by students external to the system significantly exceed the cost of transportation to the schools with magnet programs.
8. Along with the perception that the presence of schools with magnet programs is affecting program viability in community schools, course offerings in RDSB schools in optional areas in the Senior Division are actually affected by a reduced enrolment with the average number of offerings in the community schools being below the average in the schools with magnet programs.
9. Challenges with program viability at the RDSB’s community schools is typical of schools of the same size in other districts, including districts which do not have schools with magnet programs as an additional pressure. On the whole, however, and due to the efforts of staff, students and parents feel that the options they have available meet their needs.
10. Returning students in magnet programs to their home schools would not address the overall problem of program viability but simply change the schools where the problem exists. It is important to note that not all RDSB students would return to their community school if the magnet programs no longer existed.

11. Staff, students and school council chairs were generally supportive of the schools with magnet programs concept in the theoretical or generic sense seeing it as a way of offering school choice, bringing together critical masses of students, staff, equipment and resources to foster a high quality of education and involvement in a specific field that could not likely be duplicated. Increased revenue through attracting out-of-District students was also noted and appreciated.
12. Transportation and costs to support the magnet programs were seen as the most distinct disadvantage of having magnet programs in the system.
13. The next two most pressing disadvantages were cited as the loss of reputation to the community schools as effective alternatives and the reduced program offerings in the face of a smaller student body.
14. Of lesser importance were the impact of the magnet programs on French Immersion programs, a reduced student leadership capacity in the community schools and a feeling that the current magnet programs were somewhat protected.
15. Lockerby Composite School is seen by parents and many staff at both schools with magnet programs and community schools as having the best “draw” in the Rainbow District School Board despite the perception that STEP may no longer represent a substantially different program in terms of method of instruction or content.
16. Arts Education is also seen as a successful draw but its appeal, unlike Lockerby Composite School, is deemed to be based on the substantial difference in its offerings which underscores the legitimacy of its reputation as a genuine alternative in terms of the content of the program. This is, of course, enhanced by the acknowledgment that the facilities which support Arts Education cannot currently be duplicated in any other Rainbow District School Board secondary school.
17. The Integrated Technology Program at Lively District Secondary School is seen as the magnet program with the least drawing power. Challenges due to location, lack of understanding about the nature of the program and the nature of the marketing plan affect its reputation as a viable option.
18. There was little enthusiasm for expanding or replacing magnet options.
19. There was a fairly consistent level of support among educators for the development of a centralized plan to rationalize program decisions in secondary schools. The addition, reduction or replacement of magnet programs could be part of such a plan.
20. The magnet program at Lively District Secondary School is not in an ideal location due to its distance from the centre of the city. Concern exists in terms of equity about the south end of the city being served by two magnet programs in such close proximity.
21. Schools with magnet programs are a complicated issue in the Rainbow District School Board and any decision to alter their status will be supported or not by the educational community at large. Practices in the District and the professionalism of the principals and staff serve to ensure that the presence of magnet programs is managed with a degree of equanimity that is commendable.

List of Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. The current four magnet programs remain in place as program options in the Rainbow District School Board.
2. The transportation to the schools with magnet programs be retained but with stricter oversight on its application.
3. The community schools receive additional resources in the form of compensatory options that could, in part, be supported by the extra revenues generated by out-of-system student enrolment.
4. All schools with magnet programs be required to review their mandates and develop a set of core beliefs or guiding principles, a clear mission statement, aims, objectives written in terms of student learning outcomes and more detailed explanations of admission requirements, processes for admission, and standards for remaining in the magnet program.
5. All schools with magnet programs be required to undergo a cyclical review of their magnet program to ensure the program is meeting its stated mission. This review could include both an internal team and an external team and be based on a school review model that is both efficient (minimal time and resources required) and effective (addresses the intended outcomes of the review).
6. When it is deemed necessary and appropriate, community schools should be provided with assistance from the Communications Office to help them in developing more proactive strategies to market their programs at a level that is consistent with the practices used in the schools with magnet programs.
7. If all magnet programs remain in place, the segment of the magnet program currently located at Lively District Secondary School which addresses the needs of students in college, apprenticeship and workplace pathways be given additional support and be vigorously promoted.

Elementary School Admissions**Chelmsford Valley District Composite School (CVDCS)**

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	CVDCS	Grade 8 Cohort	CVDCS	Grade 8 Cohort	CVDCS	Grade 8 Cohort	CVDCS	Grade 8 Cohort	CVDCS	Grade 8 Cohort
<u>Elementary Feeder Schools</u>										
CVDCS 7&8	23	39	26	38	22	33	21	39	18	24
Larchwood	3	10	16	20	3	11	3	12	6	11
Levack	19	26	15	25	8	15	16	24	14	15
Total # of feeder school students	45	75	57	83	33	59	40	75	38	50
<u>Other Elementary Schools</u>										
Churchill			1	97	1	92				
Lively 7&8									1	63
Pinecrest							1	76		
Total # of RDSB Elementary students	45		58		34		41		39	
Coterminous Boards	7		9		5		7		3	
Outside Coterminous Boards	4		2		1		0		1	
Other (e.g. transfers, homeschooling, ISP)	1		6		2		1			
Grade 9 Students	57		75		42		49		43	
Total Enrolment	284		304		243		229		219	

Elementary School Admissions**Confederation Secondary School (CSS)**

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	CSS	Grade 8 Cohort	CSS	Grade 8 Cohort	CSS	Grade 8 Cohort	CSS	Grade 8 Cohort	CSS	Grade 8 Cohort
<u>Elementary Feeder Schools</u>										
CR Judd	22	30	18	24	19	24	18	23	23	25
Pinecrest	42	74	49	63	61	67	65	76	44	60
Valley View	32	45	40	50	38	47	42	49	44	51
Total # of feeder school students	96	149	107	137	118	138	125	148	111	136
<u>Other Elementary Schools</u>										
Alexander					1	21				
Churchill	2	99	2	97	1	92	3	93		
Copper Cliff									1	20
Lansdowne					1	37				
Larchwood	1	10								
Lively 7&8							1	61		
Monetville							1	14		
Northeastern							1	57		
Princess Anne							1	27		
Wembley	1	47	1	40						
Total # RDSB Elementary students	100		110		121		132		112	
Coterminous Boards	18		9		22		10		15	
Outside Coterminous Boards	2		1		5		3		3	
Other (e.g. transfers, homeschooling, ISP)	2		3		1		1		9	
Grade 9 Students	122		123		149		146		139	
Total Enrolment	562		558		611		607		603	

Elementary School Admissions

Lasalle Secondary School (LSS)

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	LSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LSS	Grade 8 Cohort
Elementary Feeder Schools										
Carl Nesbitt (shared with Sudbury Secondary School)	28	50	32	48	24	46	19	36	35	48
Churchill (shared with Sudbury Secondary School)	70	99	75	97	66	92	47	93	69	99
Markstay	11	20	9	15	15	24	10	22	7	18
Northeastern	35	67	50	69	27	56	30	57	39	47
Total # of feeder school students	144	236	166	229	132	218	106	208	150	212
Other Elementary Schools										
Alexander	1	16								
Algonquin					1	32				
Copper Cliff							1	12		
Lansdowne	2	46			1	37			3	26
Levack	1	26								
MacLeod	2	66	1	70			1	56		
Monetville			1	12						
Princess Anne					3	36	1	27	1	22
RH Murray					1	10				
RL Beattie	1	39								
Valley View			1	50						
Wanup	3	19	1	10	1	7				
Wembley	1	47	3	40						
Total # RDSB Elementary students	155		173		139		109		154	
Coterminous Boards	5		23		8		17		10	
Outside Coterminous Boards	4		6		4		5		2	
Other (e.g. transfers, homeschooling, ISP)	10		6		1		1		12	
Grade 9 Students	174		208		152		132		178	
Total Enrolment	886		823		804		732		727	

Elementary School Admissions

Lively District Secondary School (LDSS)

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	LDSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LDSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LDSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LDSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LDSS	Grade 8 Cohort
<u>Elementary Feeder Schools</u>										
Lively 7&8	39	76	41	76	43	61	34	61	36	63
RH Murray	13	15	9	16	5	10	8	10	10	11
Total # of feeder school students	52	91	50	92	48	71	42	71	46	74
<u>Other Elementary Schools</u>										
Alexander			1	26						
Algonquin					1	32				
Copper Cliff	1	25			3	25	2	12	5	20
CVDCS 7&8	2	39	1	38	1	33	2	39		
Lansdowne	1	46			6	37	1	46	1	26
Larchwood	1	10					1	12		
Levack	1	26	1	25	2	15	2	24		
MacLeod					1	50			2	56
Markstay									1	18
Northeastern	1	67			2	56				
Princess Anne							3	27		
Total # RDSB Elementary students	59		53		64		53		55	
Coterminous Boards	10		7		9		1		9	
Outside Coterminous Boards	3		1		1		1		2	
Other (e.g. transfers, homeschooling, ISP)	8		1		3		1		2	
Grade 9 Students	80		62		77		56		68	
Total Enrolment	374		345		337		312		304	

Lively District Secondary School - Magnet Program

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total in Magnet Program	163	167	133	100	79
Grade 9 students in Magnet Program	49	19	20	8	18
Grade 12 students in Magnet Program				57	41
Grade 12 students in Magnet Program who were in Magnet Program in Grade 9				46	17
Students in Magnet Program who graduated in 4 years				32	
Grade 9 students in Magnet Program from outside Rainbow					3

Elementary School Admissions

Lockerby Composite School (LCS)

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	LCS	Grade 8 Cohort	LCS	Grade 8 Cohort	LCS	Grade 8 Cohort	LCS	Grade 8 Cohort	LCS	Grade 8 Cohort
Elementary Feeder Schools										
Alexander (shared with Sudbury Secondary School)	9	16	18	26	7	21	2	3	9	10
Copper Cliff (shared with Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School)	7	25	7	23	7	25	4	12	7	20
MacLeod (shared with Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School)	30	66	38	70	33	50	34	56	35	56
Princess Anne (shared with Sudbury Secondary School)					17	36	12	27	4	22
RL Beattie (shared with Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School)	5	39	5	37	7	44	12	38	12	36
Total # of feeder school students	51	146	68	156	71	176	64	136	67	144
Other Elementary Schools										
Algonquin	2	42	5	40	4	32	3	49	4	37
Carl Nesbitt	7	50			6	46	11	36	5	48
Churchill	4	99	8	97	7	92	10	93	1	99
CR Judd	1	30	1	24	2	24	2	23		
CVDCS 7&8	10	39	7	38	8	33	6	39	3	24
Lansdowne	10	46	9	47	2	37	7	46	2	26
Larchwood	6	10	3	20	1	11	4	12	2	11
Levack	3	26	3	25	4	15	7	24		
Lively 7&8	19	76	17	76	8	61	21	61	13	63
Markstay	4	20			2	24			8	18
Northeastern	5	67	5	69	9	56	3	57	2	47
Pinecrest	11	74	5	63	2	67			6	60
RH Murray					4	10	2	10		
Valley View	6	45	2	50	5	47	6	49	1	51
Wanup	3	19	2	10						
Wembley	28	47	18	40						
Total # RDSB Elementary students	170		153		135		146		114	
Coterminous Boards	57		55		54		40		54	
Outside Coterminous Boards	8		8		3		6		2	
Other (e.g. transfers, homeschooling, ISP)	4		1		2		4		0	
Grade 9 Students	239		217		194		196		170	
Total Enrolment	964		944		908		882		789	

Lockerby Composite School - Magnet Program

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total in Magnet Program	742	719	688	664	617
Grade 9 students in Magnet Program	166	160	169	166	148
Grade 12 students in Magnet Program				186	147
Grade 12 students in Magnet Program who were in Magnet Program in Grade 9				127	106
Students in Magnet Program who graduated in 4 years				116	
Grade 9 students in Magnet Program from outside Rainbow					48

Elementary School Admissions

Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School (LEPSS)

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	LEPSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LEPSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LEPSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LEPSS	Grade 8 Cohort	LEPSS	Grade 8 Cohort
<u>Elementary Feeder Schools</u>										
Algonquin	29	42	33	40	25	32	37	49	34	37
Copper Cliff (shared with Lockerby Composite School)	10	25	11	23	13	25	3	12	4	20
MacLeod (shared with Lockerby Composite School)	20	66	29	70	14	50	22	56	12	56
Monetville	2	11	5	12	1	10	6	14	3	11
RL Beattie (shared with Lockerby Composite School)	29	39	34	37	30	44	21	38	23	36
Total # of feeder school students	90	183	112	182	83	161	89	169	76	160
<u>Other Elementary Schools</u>										
Alexander	4	16	1	26	9	21				
Carl Nesbitt	1	50	4	48	4	46	2	36	3	48
Churchill			1	97	1	92			6	99
CR Judd							1	23		
Lansdowne	3	46	1	47	1	37	2	46		
Larchwood							1	12		
Lively 7&8	11	76	15	76			3	61	4	63
Markstay			1	15	1	24				
Northeastern			3	69						
Pinecrest	2	74	4	63						
Princess Anne					6	36	2	27	4	22
RH Murrar			1	16						
Wanup	7	19	7	10	3	7				
Wembley	6	47	1	40						
Total # RDSB Elementary students	124		151		108		100		93	
Coterminous Boards	16		13		9		28		16	
Outside Coterminous Boards	4		6		3		5		4	
Other (e.g.transfers, homeschooling, ISP)	5		2		4		1		5	
Grade 9 Students	149		172		124		134		118	
Total Enrolment	754		746		655		611		598	

Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School - Magnet Program

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total in Magnet Program	183	239	225	232	274
Grade 9 students in Magnet Program	41	69	65	66	58
Grade 12 students in Magnet Program				45	37
Grade 12 students in Magnet Program who were in Magnet Program in Grade 9				40	28
Students in Magnet Program who graduated in 4 years				43	
Grade 9 students in Magnet Program from outside Rainbow					7

Elementary School Admissions

Sudbury Secondary School (SSS)

	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014	
	SSS	Grade 8 Cohort	SSS	Grade 8 Cohort	SSS	Grade 8 Cohort	SSS	Grade 8 Cohort	SSS	Grade 8 Cohort
Elementary Feeder Schools										
Alexander (shared with Lockerby Composite School)	1	16	5	26	4	21	1	3	1	10
Carl Nesbitt (shared with Lasalle Secondary School)	1	50			4	46	2	36		
Churchill (shared with Lasalle Secondary School)	11	99	11	97	2	92	19	93	14	99
Lansdowne	24	46	23	47	21	37	26	46	17	26
Princess Anne (shared with Lockerby Composite School)					11	36	6	27	13	22
Total # of feeder school students	37	211	39	170	42	232	54	205	45	157
Other Elementary Schools										
Algonquin	1	42	1	40			2	49		
Copper Cliff	1	25	2	23	1	25	2	12	5	20
CR Judd			1	24	2	24	1	23		
CVDCS 7&8			1	38	1	33	4	39	2	24
Larchwood	1	10			2	11	1	12	1	11
Levack	2	26	7	25	1	15				
Lively 7&8	1	76	1	76	4	61	1	61	3	63
MacLeod	2	66	2	70			2	56	4	56
Markstay	1	20	2	15			5	22	1	18
Monetville							1	14	1	11
Northeastern	2	67	2	69	4	56	1	57	1	47
Pinecrest	2	74	2	63	2	67	4	76	3	60
RH Murray	3	15	2	16	1	10			1	11
RL Beattie					1	44	3	38		
Valley View	1	45	1	50	1	47			2	51
Wanup	1	19								
Wembley	10	47	19	40						
Total # RDSB Elementary students	65		82		62		81		69	
Coterminous Boards	10		17		11		26		42	
Outside Coterminous Boards	3		5		6		6		4	
Other (e.g. transfers, homeschooling, ISP)	13		2		8		4		15	
Grade 9 Students	91		106		87		117		130	
Total Enrolment	570		556		525		545		625	

Sudbury Secondary School - Magnet Program

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Total in Magnet Program	320	282	246	242	294
Grade 9 students in Magnet Program	34	61	47	69	74
Grade 12 students in Magnet Program				64	74
Grade 12 students in Magnet Program who were in Magnet Program in Grade 9				23	35
Students in Magnet Program who graduated in 4 years				27	
Grade 9 students in Magnet Program from outside Rainbow					24

RDSB Grade 8 Elementary Enrolment, 2010										
Gr 8 Cohort	Elementary Schools	Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	Confederation Secondary School	Lasalle Secondary School	Lively District Secondary School	Lockerby Composite School	Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	Sudbury Secondary School	Total Students	Retention
16	Alexander			1		9	4	1	15	94%
42	Algonquin					2	29	1	32	76%
50	Carl Nesbitt			28		7	1	1	37	74%
99	Churchill		2	70		4		11	87	88%
25	Copper Cliff				1	7	10	1	19	76%
30	CR Judd		22			1			23	77%
39	CVDCS 7&8	23			2	10			35	90%
46	Lansdowne			2	1	10	3	24	40	87%
10	Larchwood	3	1		1	6		1	12	120%
26	Levack	19		1	1	3		2	26	100%
76	Lively 7&8				39	19	11	1	70	92%
66	MacLeod			2		30	20	2	54	82%
20	Markstay			11		4		1	16	80%
11	Monetville						2		2	18%
67	Northeastern			35	1	5		2	43	64%
74	Pinecrest		42			11	2	2	57	77%
	Princess Anne								0	N/A
15	RH Murray				13			3	16	107%
39	RL Beattie			1		5	29		35	90%
45	Valley View		32			6		1	39	87%
19	Wanup			3		3	7	1	14	74%
47	Wembley		1	1		28	6	10	46	98%
862		45	100	155	59	170	124	65	718	83%

RDSB Grade 8 Elementary Enrolment, 2011										
Gr 8 Cohort	Elementary Schools	Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	Confederation Secondary School	Lasalle Secondary School	Lively District Secondary School	Lockerby Composite School	Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	Sudbury Secondary School	Total Students	Retention
26	Alexander				1	18	1	5	25	96%
40	Algonquin					5	33	1	39	98%
48	Carl Nesbitt			32			4		36	75%
97	Churchill		2	75		8	1	11	97	100%
23	Copper Cliff					7	11	2	20	87%
24	CR Judd		18			1		1	20	83%
38	CVDCS 7&8	26			1	7		1	35	92%
47	Lansdowne					9	1	23	33	70%
20	Larchwood	16				3			19	95%
25	Levack	15			1	3		7	26	104%
76	Lively 7&8				41	17	15	1	74	97%
70	MacLeod			1		38	29	2	70	100%
15	Markstay			9			1	2	12	80%
12	Monetville			1			5		6	50%
69	Northeastern			50		5	3	2	60	87%
63	Pinecrest		49			5	4	2	60	95%
	Princess Anne								0	N/A
16	RH Murray				9		1	2	12	75%
37	RL Beattie					5	34		39	105%
50	Valley View		40	1		2		1	44	88%
10	Wanup			1		2	7		10	100%
40	Wembley		1	3		18	1	19	42	105%
846		57	110	173	53	153	151	82	779	92%

RDSB Grade 8 Elementary Enrolment, 2012										
Gr 8 Cohort	Elementary Schools	Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	Confederation Secondary School	Lasalle Secondary School	Lively District Secondary School	Lockerby Composite School	Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	Sudbury Secondary School	Total Students	Retention
21	Alexander		1			7	9	4	21	100%
32	Algonquin			1	1	4	25		31	97%
46	Carl Nesbitt			24		6	4	4	38	83%
92	Churchill	1	1	66		7	1	2	78	85%
25	Copper Cliff				3	7	13	1	24	96%
24	CR Judd		19			2		2	23	96%
33	CVDCS 7&8	22			1	8		1	32	97%
37	Lansdowne		1	1	6	2	1	21	32	86%
11	Larchwood	3				1		2	6	55%
15	Levack	8			2	4		1	15	100%
61	Lively 7&8				43	8		4	55	90%
50	MacLeod				1	33	14		48	96%
24	Markstay			15		2	1		18	75%
10	Monetville						1		1	10%
56	Northeastern			27	2	9		4	42	75%
67	Pinecrest		61			2		2	65	97%
36	Princess Anne			3		17	6	11	37	103%
10	RH Murray			1	5	4		1	11	110%
44	RL Beattie					7	30	1	38	86%
47	Valley View		38			5		1	44	94%
7	Wanup			1			3		4	57%
	Wembley								0	N/A
748		34	121	139	64	135	108	62	663	89%

RDSB Grade 8 Elementary Enrolment, 2013										
Gr 8 Cohort	Elementary Schools	Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	Confederation Secondary School	Lasalle Secondary School	Lively District Secondary School	Lockerby Composite School	Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	Sudbury Secondary School	Total Students	Retention
3	Alexander					2		1	3	100%
49	Algonquin					3	37	2	42	86%
36	Carl Nesbitt			19		11	2	2	34	94%
93	Churchill		3	47		10		19	79	85%
12	Copper Cliff			1	2	4	3	2	12	100%
23	CR Judd		18			2	1	1	22	96%
39	CVDCS 7&8	21			2	6		4	33	85%
46	Lansdowne				1	7	2	26	36	78%
12	Larchwood	3			1	4	1	1	10	83%
24	Levack	16			2	7			25	104%
61	Lively 7&8		1		34	21	3	1	60	98%
56	MacLeod			1		34	22	2	59	105%
22	Markstay			10				5	15	68%
14	Monetville		1				6	1	8	57%
57	Northeastern		1	30		3		1	35	61%
76	Pinecrest	1	65					4	70	92%
27	Princess Anne		1	1	3	12	2	6	25	93%
10	RH Murray				8	2			10	100%
38	RL Beattie					12	21	3	36	95%
49	Valley View		42			6			48	98%
	Wanup								0	N/A
	Wembley								0	N/A
747		41	132	109	53	146	100	81	662	89%

RDSB Grade 8 Elementary Enrolment, 2014

Gr 8 Cohort	Elementary Schools	Chelmsford Valley District Composite School	Confederation Secondary School	Lasalle Secondary School	Lively District Secondary School	Lockerby Composite School	Lo-Ellen Park Secondary School	Sudbury Secondary School	Total Students	Retention
10	Alexander					9		1	10	100%
37	Algonquin					4	34		38	103%
48	Carl Nesbitt			35		5	3		43	90%
99	Churchill			69		1	6	14	90	91%
20	Copper Cliff		1		5	7	4	5	22	110%
25	CR Judd		23						23	92%
24	CVDCS 7&8	18				3		2	23	96%
26	Lansdowne			3	1	2		17	23	88%
11	Larchwood	6				2		1	9	82%
15	Levack	14							14	93%
63	Lively 7&8	1			36	13	4	3	57	90%
56	MacLeod				2	35	12	4	53	95%
18	Markstay			7	1	8		1	17	94%
11	Monetville						3	1	4	36%
47	Northeastern			39		2		1	42	89%
60	Pinecrest		44			6		3	53	88%
22	Princess Anne			1		4	4	13	22	100%
11	RH Murray				10			1	11	100%
36	RL Beattie					12	23		35	97%
51	Valley View		44			1		2	47	92%
	Wanup								0	N/A
	Wembley								0	N/A
690		39	112	154	55	114	93	69	636	92%

Student Voice

(These are randomly selected verbatim responses from the students in the focus groups. The author has made liberal changes to the spelling.)

- The program has promoted substantial personal growth. I have learned to push myself and to think outside the box in all areas based upon my artistic experiences here. I am so thankful for this program.
 - Sudbury Secondary School Arts Education student
- I think magnet programs are very helpful to people who are very passionate about one thing. However, I really like Lasalle because it has all sorts of different people and different things to get involved in and it has amazing students and staff.
 - Lasalle Secondary School student
- I have had the great experience of making many friends in and out of the STEP program. This is because, even though I am not a STEP student, I have been in many STEP-classified classes and met a lot of people.
 - Lockerby Composite School non-STEP student
- I believe that schools with magnet programs are no better than non-magnet schools. I think that non-magnets get a bad reputation because, though both kinds have "bad kids" the schools with magnet programs "steal" some of the good students from the non-magnet schools. Magnet programs are not yet attractive enough for me to leave Confederation.
 - Confederation Secondary School student
- Whether you're at a school with a magnet program or not you're getting the same education and learning just as much as anyone from any other school (magnet program or not) would.
 - Confederation Secondary School student
- I am really able to develop an interest in the field of science as well as being able to meet people with similar goals and ambitions to me. It has really opened my eyes to how much I enjoy science and the medical field.
 - Lockerby Composite School magnet program student
- I have and am involved in designing and building sets for the plays. I help manage and direct some of the plays as well. I am always busy helping build something for the school.
 - Sudbury Secondary School non-magnet program student
- Lockerby is a great school because they have science, tech, sports and art. It is well rounded and that is why I came here.
 - Lockerby Composite School non-magnet program student
- Attending Sudbury Secondary as a non-magnet student has been great. I came here in Grade 10 and am now in my final year. I have had many opportunities to join the magnet program but this has not affected my learning opportunities. I do not feel I am at a disadvantage because I am not a magnet student. I am extremely happy with my education.
 - Sudbury Secondary School non-magnet program student
- I love Lasalle because it's close to my house and I don't have to go into a special area like the arts or have the pressure on marks. What I don't like is the name Lasalle has. We're not all about sports!
 - Lasalle Secondary School student