

COALITION FOR EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE  
COMMUNITY BASED SCHOOLS  
AN ALTERNATIVE TO EXPANSION OF THE  
LONG RANGE MAGNET PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coalition for Educational and Economic Justice (CEEJ) is a grassroots community-based organization formed for the purpose of advocating educational and economic equity. The organization is composed of a cross-section of people within the community, including parents, professionals, teachers, school administrators, and entrepreneurs. We have monitored educational and economic activities for the past five years. Although we are appalled by the findings, we want to make it clear that the CEEJ strongly supports the desegregation of the KSMSD and the continuation of basic school improvement components such as: (1) reduced class size, (2) staff development, (3) AAA status, (4) full-day kindergarten, (5) early childhood education, (6) extended day, (7) supportive services, (8) capital improvements, (9) the salary package, (10) summer school and (11) effective schools program. These are essential if we are to remove the vestiges of the illegally segregated system and achieve unitary status.

However, we are opposed to an expansion of the LRMP at this time. Data available to date indicate that the Long Range Magnet (LRMP) component of the plan is not succeeding in its goals of integrating the classrooms and improving academic achievement levels. The data are clear:

- a). Schools are still 75% minority (and approximately 70% African-American.)

- b). Achievement levels languish significantly below acceptable standards.
  - Missouri Mastery Achievement Test (MMAT) scores are below 1987 levels
  - ITBS scores of KCMSD students are below big city norms
  - Sixth-grade students who ostensibly have been under the plan their entire school lives remain significantly below and behind their peers in urban, suburban, and private schools.
- c). Grade retention, suspension, expulsion and drop-out rates of African-American students are soaring.

The principal barometer for determining unitary status MUST be academic achievement levels and related factors such as college matriculation, graduation, retention, expulsion, and dropout rates, NOT arbitrary and insignificant racial quotas. Our position is that the vestiges of the illegally segregated ``separate but equal`` system will be sufficiently removed when our students are performing at levels comparable to those of their private and suburban school peers, regardless of the racial composition of the classrooms. If white students who attend overwhelmingly white schools in environments that some consider racially isolated can succeed and excel, our children can reach similar levels if given adequate facilities, effective curriculum and instruction, developmental support mechanisms, and culturally relevant materials. Those who believe otherwise adhere to the notion that whites are inherently intellectually superior to African-Americans.

The LRMP has failed to restore the victims of discrimination to the positions they would have occupied in the absence of segregation. The effort has created a set of contradictions

around the rights of African-American children, and the desire to achieve integration while principles of equity and equal opportunity have been compromised. It is time for the KCMSD to turn to an approach that is conducive to all children receiving an education that not only grounds them in the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, but also helps them develop the thinking and analytical abilities necessary to influence, control, and where necessary, change their world. In addition to giving children these fundamental skills, the educational process must also teach them the value and strength of their history and culture. A new paradigm is essential.

An alternative plan designed to create school cultures that foster the educational, social, and psychological development of our youth must be implemented. This can be accomplished by establishing community based schools with restructured educational delivery systems that utilize a social action and intervention model to improve interpersonal relations within the classroom; open the process to a variety of inputs; build parental involvement; and integrates the community into the learning process. The basic components of the community based schools are a restructured and culturally relevant curriculum, instructional methodology sensitive to the needs of the students, staff and community development programs designed to achieve cultural synchronization between students, teachers, parents and the community, youth development support mechanism modeled on the "Comer Plan", and initiatives that will enable and empower

parents and the community to become integrally involved in the educational process.

This approach recognizes the significant difference between desegregation and integration. Desegregation in this context consists of removing the barriers that deny African-Americans access to equal educational opportunities and eradicating the vestiges of illegally segregated ``separate but equal'' school systems. Integration is merely the physical mixing of the races in a particular setting, facility, or institution. It must be viewed as a by-product of effective desegregation. Unlike the LRMP our plan recognizes that there will be no significant integration of the schools unless and until there is a substantial improvement in academic achievement levels. Community based schools will desegregate and integrate because they offer what all parents want - whether they live in the suburbs or in the city; send their children to private or public schools; be they Black or white - schools where:

- the climate is conducive to academic achievement and personal development;
- students are interested, engrossed, and engaged in the learning process;
- the curriculum and instruction program is relevant and challenging;
- discipline problems are minimal;
- students exhibit self-respect, respect for others, self-confidence, and commitment to community;
- Parents have a substantial voice in governance of the school at the site level.



**A brief synopsis of the fundamental components of our grass-roots community designed proposal is below.**

1. The 17 ``traditional`` or non-magnet schools will not become magnet themed schools as proposed by the KCMSD, but will be restructured as Community Based Schools. Residents of the neighborhood and community served by the school will be given a voice and authority in designing the curriculum and instruction program and the school organization.
2. The clearly failing and unsuccessful magnet programs at Southeast Middle and Southeast High School will be discontinued and those schools will be a part of the Community Based School System.
3. The Effective Schools Budget will be increased from 8 million to 10 million dollars and set aside solely to the non-magnet Community Based Schools.
4. Attendance will be based on school attendance boundaries for each school. However, a percentage of seats will be set aside for students who live outside a particular school boundary. Transportation services will be limited to those students who live outside the attendance boundaries.
5. The LRMP will be extended for no more than three (3) years. During that period the Desegregation Monitoring Committee (DMC) working in conjunction with the community will evaluate its effectiveness and make specific recommendations relative to the long-term viability of certain themes, program, and schools. Those deemed substandard, mediocre, and ineffective will be converted to heretofore successful magnet themes or community based schools.

The Community based schools will include the following programs:

## **Curriculum Reform**

1. District mandated curriculum which is culturally relevant, balanced and factual with a strong African and multicultural foundation.

The systematic exclusion of the richness, contributions, and perspective of Africa and African-Americans to the world from the American educational process, and American children, has been the cause of incalculable damage to the achievement, pride, identity, self-confidence and motivation of African-American students. The vestiges of the "separate but equal" school system cannot be removed without curriculum equity for those who have been victimized by culturally biased education.

Curricula based on a global and multicultural perspectives rather than an ethnocentric one can foster a positive self-image and increase the motivation for learning in all students. The individual's self-perception and evaluation markedly influence his intellectual as well as his personal and social behavior.

2. Instructional Reform.

The quantity and quality of experience between teacher and student, markedly influences the development, character and manifest expression of what we refer to as intelligence or intelligent behavior. Training in a variety of teaching styles is necessary for teachers to be consistent with the wide range of learning styles within various cultural and ethnic groups, including disabilities. Teachers must use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories if differences are to be valued, meaningful understandings fostered, and curriculum content and intent transformed through inclusiveness. Attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and actions of staff must be consistent to promote academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender and social-class groups. Instructional improvements are a mandatory prerequisite to enhanced academic performance.

3. Curriculum and instructional approaches conducive to the development of critical thinking skills.

The curriculum must not be "text-driven" to cultivate critical reflection, imagination, self-criticism, the ability to reason, argue, weigh up evidence and to form an independent judgment. A variety of community resources must be incorporated as the "text" from which content can be drawn to promote scholarship and inquiry. The curriculum must provide correct information on the histories, lives, and cultures of ethnic groups resulting in freedom from ignorance, prejudice, superstitions and dogmas. To this end, teachers must be retrained to help students understand, investigate and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives and biases within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it. A correct and balanced understanding of cultures is imperative to create an affirmative, non-discriminatory climate for all children to achieve.

#### 4. Curriculum that expands self-confidence and builds healthy self-concepts.

How a person responds to his/her ethnicity (within a particular societal context) has a very potent effect on self-perception and self-evaluation. The "social mirror" that many poor and ethnic children look through reflects images that result in an alienated self-concept. A multicultural curriculum combined with effective cross cultural interactional models will result in a wholistic self-concept where the contributions and experiences of each cultural/ethnic group involved in the human experience is valued. A healthy self-concept increases confidence, decreases discipline problems, increases social and personal responsibility, decreases the drop-out rate, and increases academic achievement.

### **Empowering School Culture**

Incorporates Supportive Services, Mentor Programs, Extended Day, and School Governance as techniques to empower parents, especially those with relatively little or no formal education, to become more competent at stimulating the intellectual development of their children.

#### 1. SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

##### A. Educational psychologist trained in alternative assessment.

Impoverished environments generate effects which accumulate over time and inhibit intellectual growth and functionality in children exposed to those environments. Relations between parent, school, community, and child become strained. Culturally competent psychologists trained in alternative assessments can serve both a preventive as well as a therapeutic functions in schools identifying potential problem situations and preventing them from developing into full-blown crises. The psychologists can work with individual teachers to address specific classroom problems in culturally appropriate ways and deal directly with individual student problems to help students adjust to and cope with the demands of the classroom without demoralizing labels and strategies that retard achievement.

##### B. Certified Home-School Social Workers.

Culturally aware and competent certified home-school social workers can provide home intervention services designed to enhance parental self-esteem, self-acceptance, cultural pride and identity as important factors in transforming the socio-emotional and intellectual environment of the home. In this way, parents develop competence in providing an intellectually stimulating home environment. The Home-School Social Workers will serve as a bridge between the management of behavior in the classroom (including development of study habits) and the home by providing child and family development counseling and services designed to reduce the cumulative affects of impoverishment which results in under performance and under achievement in children exposed to those environments.

C. Parent "outreach" coordinator at building sites.

Culturally competent and sensitive parent "outreach" coordinators at each of the 17 school sites would coordinate early childhood development activities appropriate to optimizing the mental and physical potential of children. Additionally, these "outreach" coordinators would promote three sequential levels of parent participation: 1) broad-based activities for a large number of parents, 2) a program encouraging parent participation in day-to-day school activities as tutors, aides, etc., 3) parents, staff and student collaborations in school governance.

D. School Grandparents and Corps of Retired Educators.

Utilization of valuable community resources such as grandparents and retired educators as positive role models, classroom assistants, tutors, aides, etc. to provide a direct linkage with intergenerational exchanges, to develop and foster extended family respect, appreciation, and the development of constructive values.

E. Nutritional specialists and Health Care Service (School Nurses)

Nutrition is another important area that affects academic performance. On site nutritional specialists can ensure the appropriate linkages between nutrition, diet, physical fitness, mental health and behavior.

Culturally sensitive on site nurses can provide frequent health checks, dispense medications and serve as a member of the Mental Health Team consisting of the school administrators, psychologist, social worker, special education teacher, guidance counselors, home school coordinator, and parent "outreach" coordinator.

## 2. MENTOR PROGRAM

A. Community-based, Ethnically Diverse Role Models

Use trained experienced professionals from community based resources to act as role models for our youth.

B. Institute a Master Teacher program

Identify and use experienced, culturally competent and multicultural educators as assistants and/or mentors to new teachers transferred and/or newly hired to the KCMSD to assist in the knowledge transfer of techniques and strategies that inspire, stimulate and motivate youth and result in increased self-esteem and academic performance.



### 3. EXTENDED OPERATING HOURS/EXTENDED YEAR

#### A. Parents teaching parents about parenting skills

Experienced parents can serve as "teachers" to teenage parents to share parenting strategies/techniques that work to reduce stress for the parent and child and contribute to the rearing of psychologically and socially wholesome, organized, and disciplined children eager to achieve.

#### B. Year round instructional component

Before and after school selected academic instruction for students, including preschool and Head Start programs, from both inside and outside the school's boundaries focusing on tutoring and the development of basic skills and computer literacy, year round.

#### C. Non-Instructional component

Development and implementation of high interest unstructured, non-graded, opportunities for students to select cultural activities, games, projects, computer assisted tutorials/drills, or use the period for homework completion to encourage enjoyment and pursuit of on-going learning.

#### D. Sports component/physical development

Development of structured sports and physical development activities to allow for the constructive expenditure of energy and tension release.

#### E. Community Involvement

Community involvement in combined school and community clubs such as history, business, African clubs, skills/craft clubs, etc. with teachers, education advocates, Health Care Team, and as recipients of services such as adult tutoring, should be developed and provided year round.

#### F. Extended year concept

Everything possible is to be done in groups and games, as contests and exhibitions in acknowledgement of the African-American youths delight in competition through development of extended year programs to foster mental, physical, and academic achievement year round encouraging competition between schools.

#### 4. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

##### A. Parent involvement

Develop and implement procedures to ensure parent involvement at all levels of the school governance in moving from a bureaucratic method of management to a system of democratic participation in which parents play a key role.

##### B. Bottom-up planning

Community based resources, including CEEJ, parents, and other community groups, are to be intricately involved in all planning and development ensuring base level participation and input into the development of appropriate and culturally sensitive models to be utilized in the remaining 17 elementary schools. To ensure meaningful change in academic reform, school reorganization, new school designs, social reform towards African-centered education and multicultural education, instructional emphasis, staff development, supportive services, extended day, and the mentor program, bottom-up input and participation is imperative.

##### C. Monitoring Program

Development and implementation of an effective school-based monitoring program to maintain accountability in effective and consistent implementation of curriculum reform, supportive services, staff development, mentor program, extended day and school governance as delineated in this proposal for each of the 17 elementary schools.

##### D. Accountability Procedures

Develop system-wide monitoring and accountability procedures for all aspects of this proposal as it relates to the 17 elementary schools and the district at large to include community based resource participation and input into the development and monitoring of the accountability procedures.

##### E. Recruitment of African-American male teachers

Mandated recruitment efforts directed towards African-American males in teaching and administrative positions throughout the KCMSD with a special focus on the recruitment of African-American male teachers at the elementary education level.

##### F. Paraprofessionals systematically advanced into Teacher status

Institute a plan designed to advance paraprofessionals into the status of teachers through instituting "on-the-job training" and accreditation for classroom experience as incentives.

## **Staff Development**

1. Cultural sensitivity and competency training for all staff, regardless of race or gender

Teachers, administrators, counselors, and school board members must receive on-going cultural competence training to realign behaviors, attitudes and policies to promote cultural synchronization and work more effectively in cross-cultural situations to achieve the desired improvements for all students.

2. In-service Teachers to teach accurate Multicultural curricula.

Standards should be developed to ensure those providing in-service training to teachers are equipped with and consistently utilize the most accurate information on multicultural perspectives in all disciplines.

3. Train teachers to understand the diverse learning styles of all children.

The differences in the methods of selecting and classifying information, known as cognitive styles, and the relationship with specific approaches used within school systems tend to place some youth at a greater advantage in learning style compatibility. Students who have not developed cognitive organization skills and those who function with a different cognitive style will not only be poor achievers early in school, but will also become worse as they move to higher grade levels. It is essential that teachers and principals receive training in understanding different learning styles to develop the appropriate environments and utilize appropriate strategies to allow all students to learn effectively.

4. Develop district-wide training to instruct teachers how to use Multicultural curriculum at the site level and employ community based resources to train personnel

Development and distribution of newly developed Multicultural curricula will be ineffective without a district-wide training and monitoring process to address attitudes. The KCMSD must train teachers and principals to effectively use the curriculum throughout the year to satisfy the core competencies for each discipline.

5. Institute an expanded "Parents as Teachers" program

The implementation of an expanded "Parents as Teachers" program taught by community based institutions will provide informed and culturally appropriate clinical approaches to increase student achievement through tutoring, study habit development, and behavior management while maximizing on community resources and extending the learning experience.