



A QUALITATIVE REPORT

ON

ATTITUDES TOWARD MAGNET SCHOOLS

Submitted To:

THE KANSAS CITY MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICT

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6314 Brookside Plaza  
Suite 302  
Kansas City, MO 64113  
(816) 363-6587

III. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

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#### Awareness and Attitudes Toward Magnet Schools

1. In all the resident sample segments, there was at least some awareness of magnet schools exhibited with most respondents being familiar with the Lincoln Academy. As might be expected, the KCMSD public users had a greater awareness of the current magnet schools within the district. A number of perceptions relative to magnet schools were volunteered but the only consistent ideas mentioned were:
  - they are public schools with voluntary enrollment
  - they have specialized curriculum for higher academic achievers/gifted and talented students
  - they are designed to attract non-minority students back into public schools to help desegregate the district.
2. Among those most familiar with magnet schools (including current users), there was the opinion expressed that these schools were a disappointment. Respondents commented that while the concept was good, the current programs had not been implemented effectively and/or were only partially successful. This reflects that there may exist some degree of negative public bias toward magnet schools.
3. Prior to the discussion of specific magnet school concepts, respondents were exposed to a core description of magnet schools. On an overall basis, there was a moderate level of interest expressed relative to the development of magnet schools in the Kansas City Missouri School District. Within the three resident segments, the highest level of interest was shown by current KCMSD public school users and the lowest level of interest was reflected by suburban residents.
4. Among the KCMSD Public School Users, the relatively high level of interest in magnet schools was primarily generated by their low level of satisfaction with regular public schools. These parents recognized magnet schools as representing an opportunity for a higher quality of education than their children currently received.
5. Among the KCMSD private school users there was a moderate-to-low overall level of interest evidenced. Attraction to magnet schools in these groups was evidenced among parents whose decision to enroll their children in private schools was driven by their poor perceptions or experiences with public schools rather than as a choice of preference. However, most of these people indicated that their enrollment could only successfully be solicited after the magnet schools were "tested" and proven effective.

6. Among the three suburban resident samples, the only group displaying a potential for future enrollment was the South Suburban panel comprised of parents from the Center, Hickman Mills and Raytown Districts. However, it may be anticipated that any enrollment from these areas will be slow and based upon their perception of the quality and uniqueness of magnet schools as compared to their own public schools.
7. Throughout the groups, there were several attitudes espoused by parents in consideration of magnet schools. These perceptions and issues must be considered as a part of the magnet development program as they may directly effect the initial success and potential growth of any specific magnet school.
8. First, one of the strongest attitudes expressed was that residents considered it much more important and preferable to have the quality of education improved in current public schools in lieu of the development of new specialty schools. Although current KCMSD public school users were particularly adamant on this issue, both the private school users and suburban groups also reflected this opinion. In essence, these people felt that if public schools were what they "should be", there would be no need for magnet schools.
9. In general, all respondents recognized that magnet schools appeared to represent an opportunity for a higher quality of education and academic achievement within the KCMSD. However, there was a strong perception that the development of magnet schools could result in a two-tiered educational system. This attitude related to the respondents' image that magnet schools were designed for and would primarily draw students with higher academic capabilities. Thus, students remaining in regular public schools would not have the same advantages or quality of education.
10. In all resident samples, respondents indicated that their current perceptions of the KCMSD affected their reaction to and interest in the development of magnet schools. Panelists stated that the concept lacked credibility due to what they saw as the current poor state of the public schools and felt that administration would have difficulty developing effective new schools in addition to handling present facilities. A few people admitted their images were a result of recent publicity while others related personal experiences with their children in public schools.
11. In addition, a disadvantage associated with the concept of magnet schools was the foreseen element of bussing children to schools outside of their neighborhood. Parents speculated that the children would have lengthy bus trips to schools in areas that were not as familiar or "safe" as those in their own neighborhoods. This was a particular concern for elementary level children whom parents felt should spend no longer than 20-30 minutes maximum in transit. In this regard, the locations chosen for magnet schools will be important.



## Evaluation of Specific Magnet School Concepts

1. There were a total of five magnet school concepts (2 elementary and 3 secondary) exposed for consumer reaction:
  - \* The Academic Academy - elementary
  - \* Math and Sciences - elementary
  - \* College Preparatory - secondary
  - \* Business Management Academy - secondary
  - \* Math, Science, and Engineering - secondary
2. The majority of respondents throughout the groups indicated they would be more likely to enroll children in a magnet school at the secondary level (particularly 9th grade and above) than at the elementary level. Parents explained that they felt elementary students primarily needed a well-rounded curriculum of the basics and that any extra emphasis was neither necessary nor could be handled by young children.
3. Panelists also repeatedly volunteered that small children did not show specific areas of interest or talent at least until the third or fourth grade, making the selection of an elementary program emphasis difficult, if not impractical.
4. Of the two elementary concepts, there was more interest expressed in the Academic Academy. The majority of the respondents in all three resident samples indicated they would have a greater tendency to select this magnet school. The Academic Academy was seen as preferable because it offered a more rounded/diversified curriculum which respondents perceived as being more appropriate for an elementary level and as having wider appeal.
5. Among the three secondary magnet school concepts, the College Preparatory and the Math, Science and Engineering programs generated the strongest appeal. Respondents felt these two programs would apply to the greatest number of people and better addressed the interests and needs of secondary students on an overall basis.
6. There were a number of elements inherent in the magnet school concepts that parents found particularly appealing and which would potentially influence enrollment in a positive manner. It was indicated that these aspects should continue to be a part of the considerations for magnet school plans.

### Elementary Concepts

\*Lower enrollment and better teacher-pupil ratios (1/15-18)

\*Higher-order thinking skills

### Secondary Concept

\*Lower enrollment and better teacher-pupil ratios (20/1 or below)

\*High academic standards

\*Specialists on staff

\*A structured, disciplined environment

\*Flexible nine-month sessions

\*High tech/state-of-the-art equipment

\*Structured, disciplined environment

\*Programs which can be recognized as motivating and challenging

\*Air-conditioned facilities

\*Counseling staff

7. After each concept was discussed, potential school sites were exposed for respondent reaction. The locations or areas presented relative to the individual concepts were:

\* The Academic Academy: Westport/Valentine or Swope Park area

\* Business Management Academy: KC Tech Center, Westport or Swope Park area

\* Math and Sciences: Waldo or Swope Park area

\* Math, Science and Engineering: Lincoln Academy, Westport or Swope Park area

\* College Preparatory: Lincoln Academy or Westport area

8. Respondents in all the groups generally felt that their child's school should be within 5 miles of home. As previously mentioned, parents were more sensitive to school locations for their elementary students whom they preferred within 1-2 miles or 10-15 minutes away. From this standpoint, few if any of the proposed sites were considered appealing or feasible by most of the respondents in this study.
9. Throughout the groups, respondents voiced several questions and concerns that may require addressing prior to and/or during recruiting efforts.

\* The source of funding for magnet schools and the financial effect relative to either/or taxes and regular public schools.

\* The standards or criteria to be set for magnet school enrollment -- academic and administrative.

\* The perception that magnet schools are designed only for the academic "elite" or advanced rather than for "normal" students.

\* The types of extra-curricular activities that will be available.

\* The school's allowance for and interest in having parental involvement.

IV. DETAILED FINDINGS

## A. GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD CURRENT SCHOOL PROGRAM

### 1. School Selection Factors

- When considering a school for their child, parents' primary consideration is the "quality of education" in that school. Quality education, however, can be represented by different attributes. A AAA rating, reputation, strict discipline and supervision, qualified teachers, socialization with students of different backgrounds and races, college preparedness or religious instruction were the primary attributes associated with "quality education" with various parent groups. While the relative importance of these factors differed among parents, most parents stated that they would switch, and some even had switched, their child's school if the academic performance was not acceptable.
- For most parents, the discipline exerted by teachers and administration is as important a criteria as the quality of education. In fact, many feel that a school is unable to reach an acceptable level of academic performance without strict disciplinary guidelines for the students. The following verbatim comments express most respondents' reactions --
  - \* Discipline is the most important thing.
  - \* I don't think you can have education unless you've got discipline with it.
  - \* It wasn't that way when I was in school...the teachers could box your ears, and I think maybe they should still...within reason.
  - \* Academics first and then discipline...they should work together. If you can't hold the classroom's attention, you're not going to teach them.
- Convenience to home is a major influence on school selection for most parents. This factor correlates strongly with bussing since, in cases of sickness or after-school activities, working parents have difficulty getting the student home. Thus, being totally dependent on busses is inconvenient according to most parents.
  - \* ...Not having to be transported across the freeway  
...I really want my children to walk to school.



- \* I'm not totally against bussing. But I'm against shipping your kids one-half hour to an hour away from home...if they ship my kid one hour away from my house and I have to go to school to get him, I'm going to have a drive.
- \* You choose an area because it's close to the school and you like the school...you make your financial commitment and all of a sudden your children aren't going to that school anymore...they bus them one-half hour to an hour and a half to a school that is not your neighborhood school. If you live in an economically depressed area and don't have two cars, what happens if your child gets sick?
- Suburban parents indicated that they selected their family home based on the quality of schooling available in their area. Therefore the school selection was an important ingredient to the whole family's living arrangement. Access/convenience to a good public school was much more of an integral part of buying a home for suburban parents than for District parents.
  - \* That's why I built the house in the neighborhood I'm in...so they could go to that school.
  - \* You buy in a neighborhood with a neighborhood school.
  - \* When we wanted to buy a home, we started looking up here, in this district.
  - \* When we purchased our home we wanted it within walking distance of an elementary school...I made sure it was an AAA-rated district.
- Parents in general were very cognizant of their district's academic rating. District parents were well aware of KCMSD's AA-rating while suburban parents recognized their districts' AAA-status.
- To evaluate a possible school for their child, parents rely on the following evaluation methods--
  - \* Recommendations from other parents, usually those with older children and more experience with the school.
  - \* Personal observation of the facility, teachers in the classroom and students.
  - \* The school's past success in securing college admissions for its graduates.
  - \* Observed safety of the children, on the bus, in the playground and in the classroom.
  - \* Realtors' advice about where to buy (or not buy) a house due to quality of public schooling.

- School satisfaction is usually a result of parental involvement as well. Parents' support of a school through volunteer work or PTA's appears to encourage their sense of control over their child's education.

## 2. Perceptions of Kansas City School District

- Among those parents who do not currently send their child to public school in KCMSD, perceptions were primarily critical and founded on media coverage, word of mouth, and in some cases, personal experience.
- Many private school parents who live within KCMSD had had their children in public schools at one time but removed them. Their reasons: below standard education/academic performance, lack of physical security and fear of no college admission.
  - \* The kids would get in fights in the bathrooms. Kids would gang up on each other. That's when they were really little and that's why I decided to send them [to public school]...where they would be safe.
  - \* You have no choice [in Kansas City] because the public school system is so bad.
  - \* ...in the [Kansas City] public grade schools if they tell you that your child is doing average you think he's doing great. What average means is that if he's a third grader, he's reading at second grade level. That's what their average is.
  - \* There's nobody in this room who would say there is any comparing the public school system in this city with any of this city's private schools.
  - \* We had been led to believe our daughter was doing fine at school. My wife spent a lot of time going up to school and assisting on things. But we found out through testing that our daughter was not doing at all well at school...We went in orbit over that. That's when we became aware of the serious difference between public and private schools.
- Most suburban parents moved to their community to have access to good public schools and stated that living in Kansas City was never an option for that reason. While most of these parents have never tried the District firsthand, the schools' reputation, generated by media reporting and word of mouth, has been sufficient to keep them away.
  - \* Kansas City was out of the question.
  - \* I have heard rumors that in [KCMSD] you may be an English teacher teaching Science, or wherever there's an opening they stick you.

- \* I've heard...that the teachers [in KCMSD] aren't necessarily qualified for whatever they're teaching, especially in the upper grades.
- \* It's not the bussing per se. It's the overrating of minorities, the lack of security...the Kansas City Star who has put the District as far down as anybody else. In Kansas City, the bussing issue is killing that District.

### 3. Satisfaction with Present School Choice

#### a. Kansas City District -- Public School Parents

- Public school parents in KCMSD had different views and levels of satisfaction with their child's schooling. Parents in the Northeast and Van Horn areas were constrained financially from sending their children elsewhere. They were extremely dissatisfied with the public schools yet felt they did not have a choice. Their primary complaints were severe lack of discipline and fear of their child's physical safety (at school and on the bus), forced bussing due to closed schools, substandard academic performance, insufficient teachers and large classrooms and inadequate materials.

- \* I don't like the fact that I live in one part of town and they have to be bussed to another part of town.
- \* I just don't think the teachers care that much...because when kids can miss 20 days of school and still make a "B", I just don't think [they care].
- \* They don't have enough books for the kids. I want my boys [grades 7 and 12 - Nowlin] to bring homework home, and they can't because there's not enough books.
- \* We got our bus driver that kind of throws my daughter around whenever he feels like it. She's been bruised two or three times. [junior high student - Bridger]
- \* ...they have a whole room full of broken computers. Six and seven kids on one little computer...out of a class of 30, they had 5 [computers] that worked. [Van Horn parent]
- \* They do not have good teachers at Nowlin. I disagree with everything they do there.



- \* I'm not going to have one of my children going to Northeast...there's too much trouble...violence...the teachers don't care...We are considering moving.'
- \* I mean, where you live is where you have to...if you can't afford a private school, then you go where they say your child's going.
- Southwest Kansas City public parents were much more loyal to their schools. Even though they recognize their schools' shortcomings, they support public education in general and specifically express commitment to improve their area schools.
- \* I believe that I have a basic support of the public schools that exist in my area and that's where my kids are going to go.
- \* I don't necessarily know that my children are getting the best possible education that I could provide them given the resources. But private schools were never an option in my opinion.
- \* I'm happy with the public schools. At Bingham and at Bryant I feel like the teachers I've met are great...My problem is the big classrooms and I think there's a discipline problem.
- \* Certainly we don't have the best school district anywhere...but we can do things about that individually.

b. Kansas City - Private School Parents

- The primary impetus for selecting private (non-parochial) education in Kansas City is the perception that private school education, regardless of which school is chosen, far exceeds the quality of education available in Kansas City public schools.
- \* [reason for picking a private school:] I would say quality in the private and lack of quality in the public.
- \* You have no choice, because the public school system is so bad in Kansas City.
- \* I asked the people I knew who knew anything about Lincoln Academy and also about Westport and what we came up with was that they both had tendencies to be violent.
- As stated earlier, many private school parents in the District have once had their child in public school. They switched to be assured of a challenging academic curriculum, physical safety for their children, college prep programs and a school located close to their home (as opposed to bussing). These parents feel that a private school has more



control over their child -- through smaller class sizes, better school management and stricter discipline. These factors equate to a higher quality of education that is well worth the price.

\* ...her friends, they were running into some difficulty in getting to attend the colleges of their choice because of the lack of proper education at Southwest. She was horrified...by Christmas, she chose to withdraw.

- Parochial school parents are strongly motivated by their desire for a religious education for their child. In fact, religion is even more important to many of these parents than quality of education. Parochial parents have a strong loyalty to their school for this reason and will unlikely switch their child to a non-church supported school for any reason.

- Private school parents do recognize that the disadvantages to their choice are lack of transportation, the financial commitment and a homogeneous student body. Still, these factors do not impinge on their satisfaction given that the school provides quality education.

\* The kids lose touch with the other kids his age in the neighborhood because he's not in the same classes and doing the same things...it tends to be too homogeneous.

\* [I would like to see] more racial integration.

- Those private school parents who both work find that day care is more readily available in private schools. This is a motivating factor for private school parents.

#### c. Suburban - Public School Parents

- Suburban parents appear very loyal to and satisfied with their schools. They report a wide variety of school programs and curricula, strict discipline, convenience, and a great deal of parental involvement. If their child is bussed, the distance is minimal.

\* I chose Indian Creek specifically because it is quality education.

\* [The teachers have a] concern for your child. They're a real tight knit group that knows what is going on in that school. And not only in their classes...their counseling staff is great...and the administration is good.

\* I have found the special education to be excellent.

- Like the Southwest KCMSD parents, suburban parents are loyal to the principle of public education. Their personal involvement and enrollment of their children are the means by which they support the institution of public schooling.

\* I firmly believe in public education...so that belief system tells me that if the people who are strongly interested in education all go to private schools, then what shape are the public schools going to be in? I believe in a public system that's offered for all people and we have to have people stay in that system who are interested.

- Suburban parents had only negative comments regarding KCMSD.

\* The parents' involvement...it's missing there.

\* I can make a comparison of our son's being in the band. In recent competition, we saw Van Horn's band...it was pitiful.

\* I graduated (in Kansas City District) in 1964...they didn't require the students to do anything, and I'm sure that the discipline went down; the teachers really just gave up.

\* I graduated from Southwest. And later on, 15 years later, I had a friend who taught there, and in that period of time it had changed to the point that security guards were in the hallways at all times for the faculty. They had to keep the restrooms locked ...To me that sounds like a juvenile detention facility, not a school.

ATTACHMENT B

MARKET INFORMATION SERVICES



Definitive Answers Through Market Research

6314 Brookside Plaza / Suite 302 / Kansas City, Missouri 64113 / (816) 363 • 6587

MAGNET SCHOOL SURVEY

Presented To The  
School District of Kansas City, Missouri

January 13, 1986



## Preface

This report outlines the findings from Phase I of the Magnet School evaluation concerning the population's perceptions of the Magnet School program, one aspect of the court-ordered desegregation plan. Survey findings are presented in two sections -- a summarized discussion of findings in Section IV and more detailed findings with supporting data in Section V. An abbreviated discussion of the entire project is provided in an Executive Summary, immediately following this Preface. The reader with avid interest in the research techniques employed, such as methodology and demographic breakdowns of the sample, is guided to Sections II and III.

Market Information Services acknowledges the help and support of Dr. Paul Holmes and Jim Roleke of the Planning, Research and Evaluation Department at KCMSD in the execution of this research.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to the court-ordered desegregation program, the Kansas City, Missouri School District requested a resident survey which would evaluate residents' interest in the Magnet School program. The study was designed to reflect the Kansas City District and suburban districts' population by examining key demographic and school enrollment groups, as follows:

- \* Suburban districts -- white parents only, randomly selected from the eleven (11) districts bordering the KCMSD, public and private school enrollees.
- \* Kansas City District -- Minority and white parents, public and private school enrollees.

A total of 808 interviews were completed using a stratified sampling method which proportionalized the sample by school district population in the sampling areas. Respondents were parents of school age children and fit the enrollment and racial categories mentioned above.

The findings indicated that parents of children currently enrolled in the Kansas City District schools are the most interested in Magnet Schools compared to other parents in the study. These KCMSD families indicate that the high academic standards of Magnet Schools are an appealing alternative to the substandard education they feel their children currently are receiving.

Parents of children who are enrolled in private school, yet who live within the K.C. District, also indicate positive, although lower, interest. About two-thirds of these private-school parents said they would definitely/positively enroll their child in a Magnet School if the programs were of interest.

Those parents in suburban school districts who are most interested currently have their children in public, rather than private, schools; one half of suburban public school parents indicate positive interest in Magnet School enrollment, yet these parents express much more concern regarding bussing, commuting distance and the neighborhood in which a Magnet School may be located.

Among all white parents, those Magnet curricula which spark highest interest are college preparatory, gifted, math, science and engineering and high-tech programs. Even at the elementary level, a program designed to prepare students for college prep and advanced placement programs in high school received the greatest interest. Overall, white parents place high importance in college prep curricula.

Minority families expressed high interest in Magnet Schools also. While their interest in specific programs was similar to that of white families, they are less interested in college prep programs. Among the two groups, white parents appear more selective and discriminating regarding school programs than minorities. Thus, Magnet School programs should be selected which create the greatest interest among white parents.

About three-fourths of the population is aware of the desegregation plan, with suburban families much more aware than parents who reside in the K.C. District. Among those who have heard of the plan, the majority of residents in the entire area do not give their support. Suburban families are much less supportive than District families; 75% of suburban households do not support the desegregation plan.

Phase I of the Magnet School analysis indicated positive interest in this program among minority and white families. Considerations which impact the enrollment decision include:

- \* Availability of Magnet programs which meet nonminorities' standards for academic excellence
- \* Neighborhoods in which schools are located
- \* Distance children would have to travel
- \* Bussing being provided

Phase II of the evaluation, focus groups with white parents in selected neighborhoods, will provide more depth and direction to the survey findings.



## I. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

As part of the court-ordered desegregation program, the Kansas City, Missouri School District was ordered to formulate programs which would transfer black students into primarily white suburban districts and attract white students into the Kansas City public school system. The Magnet School concept is designed to meet the latter objective through the development of specialized schools which offer unique attractive curricula of interest to white student families. The KCMSD was asked to study the public's response to alternative Magnet School themes to test overall interest in the Magnet School concept and relative interest in specific Magnet programs.

To obtain this information, Market Information Services (MIS) was contracted by the KCMSD to conduct a resident survey encompassing geographic areas governed by the Kansas City school district and those governed by each of the eleven (11) suburban districts. The respondent sample was intended to represent the school district's population by minority/non-minority status and public/private school enrollment.

Specific objectives of the research were:

1. To evaluate residents' interest in the Magnet school program
2. To evaluate public awareness and support for the desegregation plan
3. To identify those Magnet School themes which generate interest among the population, specifically non-minorities in the suburban areas
4. To obtain preliminary insight into those perceived factors which suppress interest in the Magnet School concept
5. To determine those attributes of their child's education which impact parent's selection of a particular school

Responses to these questions would be examined by the total sample and by key subgroups, i.e. suburban vs. KCMSD residents, minorities/non-minorities, etc.

This project constitutes Phase I of the Magnet School program evaluation. Phase II consists of focus groups to obtain more in-depth insight into perceptions of the Magnet School program and will be completed by March 1.

## II. METHODOLOGY

To accomplish the stated objectives, a telephone survey was performed with 808 residents of the Kansas City and suburban school districts. Respondent names were drawn randomly (by location) and all interviews were conducted by professional market research interviewers trained on this specific study by MIS staff. The interview itself ranged from 8 to 12 minutes in length; all interviews were conducted from December 5th to 15th, 1985.

The questionnaire instrument was designed by MIS in consultation with the Planning, Research & Evaluation Department, with consideration of study objectives and time constraints regulating content and length of the interview.

The suburban population was represented by the following districts:

- |                      |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. Park Hill         | 7. Raytown       |
| 2. North Kansas City | 8. Hickman Mills |
| 3. Liberty           | 9. Center        |
| 4. Fort Osage        | 10. Grandview    |
| 5. Independence      | 11. Lee's Summit |
| 6. Blue Springs      |                  |

The KCMSD provided maps which delineated all school boundaries.

All respondents in the study fit the following required criteria:

- \* No member of the immediate household was employed in the field of education nor in market research
- \* Heads-of-household only (male or female)
- \* At least 21 years of age
- \* Have at least one child enrolled in a public or private school, at either the elementary or secondary level
- \* Have not been previously interviewed on educational topics

MIS devised a stratified sampling plan as the sampling framework which represented proportionately the groups targeted for the study, as listed below:

\* KCMSD respondents (38% of sample)

- Public school vs. private school enrollment
- Minority vs. non-minority status

\* Suburban district respondents (62% of sample)

- All non-minority status (whites)
- Public vs. private school enrollment

The stratified/proportional sample was selected to accurately reflect the true population as represented by these key groups. The study was not designed nor are the results intended to reflect individual subgroup's true attitudes toward Magnet Schools with a high degree of confidence. As a result of the proportional weighting, groups which represent a higher proportion of the population can be examined with greater reliability than those with lower representation, exhibited by low sample size. Hence, responses of whites in the KCMSD and private school enrollees in suburban areas have lower reliability, since their actual populations are low, compared to the high reliability of responses of larger groups, such as all suburban respondents, suburban public school enrollees and all KCMSD respondents.

The overall sample represents the entire school district population at 95% confidence  $\pm 4\%$  error, i.e. responses may vary at most  $+ 4\%$  or  $- 4\%$  in the true population. In contrast, whites within the KCMSD may vary at most  $\pm 17\%$  from the sample's response, a much higher level of error since only 64 respondents fit this category. This variability may be reduced depending on each group's response to a particular question and is discussed under key questions.

No problem occurred during fielding or execution of the survey. MIS required 15% verification of respondents and 100% accuracy in the interviews. Open-ended responses were coded for data entry, with codes approved by MIS. Data processing included cross tabulations of all questionnaire points, analysis of variance testing across sample subgroups and further analysis of the relative importance of school selection factors.

All significant differences stated in the report are significant at the 95% confidence level.



### III. SAMPLE PROFILE

As stated in the methodology, 38% of the sample (228n) were located in the KCMSD while the remaining 62% (380n) were residents of suburban school districts. Within those categories, the following breakdowns occurred:

	Suburban	KCMSD	
	Whites (380)	Whites (64)	Minorities (164)
Enrollment			
Public School	90%	66%	86%
Private - parochial	7	25	11
- nonparochial	3	9	3

Additional demographic characteristics of the sample were:

- \* 90% of the minorities in the KCMSD were Black, 7% were Hispanic and 3% fit other ethnic categories
- \* White families in the KCMSD had significantly fewer children per household than both District minority families and suburban white families.
- \* On the whole, 44% of the sample had children in the elementary grades only, 31% were enrolled in secondary grade levels and 25% had children at both grade levels. This proportion was consistent across all subgroups of the sample.
- \* Respondents had (on average) 4.2 members in their immediate household--this figure also did not differ across sample groups.
- \* Household incomes are outlined below. Consistently, incomes of families whose children go to private school were consistently higher than those of public school parents and minority incomes were significantly lower than white's.



	<u>Average Income*</u>
KC District - total	\$21,896
- Non-minorities	\$28,418
- Minorities	\$19,208
- Public enrollees	\$29,782
- Private enrollees	\$36,176
Suburban whites - total	\$35,685
- Public enrollees	\$34,840
- Private enrollees	\$42,929

- \* Note: 13% refused to answer this question and were excluded from the income averaging.
- \* In the total sample, 22% of the respondents were male and 78% were female. The higher female ratio is probably due to interviewing during the daytime, necessitated by the study's timetable.
- \* Within the suburban school districts, the sample was divided as stated below. While specific quotas by district were not required, representation was obtained from each of the eleven in both the public and private school enrollment categories.

	<u>Suburban Districts</u>		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Public</u>	<u>Private</u>
	(380)	(341)	(39)
1. Park Hill	8%	8%	13%
2. North K.C.	15	15	10
3. Liberty	8	8	10
4. Fort Osage	9	10	3
5. Independence	12	11	21
6. Blue Springs	13	13	13
7. Raytown	14	15	3
8. Hickman Mills	7	8	3
9. Center	4	4	13
10. Grandview	5	4	10
11. Lee's Summit	4	5	3

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

The following statements represent highlights of the Magnet School survey. More detailed findings are outlined in Section V.

1. When selecting a school for their child's education, white families place emphasis on academic excellence, i.e. a college preparatory program along with a good basic academic curriculum. In addition, they want a school that encourages parental involvement and support.
  - \* While the top educational priority with minority parents is also a good, basic curriculum, minorities are significantly less interested in a college prep program and place more emphasis on remedial help for a child's learning problems.
2. Parents of children in Kansas City public schools were much less satisfied with the quality of education than parents in suburban districts and parents whose children are in private schools. Only 37% of District parents rated the K.C. District as excellent or very good compared to 73% of suburban public school parents who rated their districts highly.
3. Awareness of the Magnet School concept is relatively low; about half of the sample had heard of the Magnet School program.
4. White parents of children in Kansas City public schools find the Magnet School concept an attractive alternative to the current quality of education in the Kansas City school system. District parents who were dissatisfied with the District's education were interested in the possibility of advanced academic studies available in Magnet Schools. Over 90% of public school parents in the District would probably/definitely enroll their child in a magnet school if the programs offered interested them.
  - \* Although private school parents in the District expressed slightly less interest, almost two-thirds of this group were interested in Magnet School enrollment.
5. In suburban areas, about one-half of the white parents with children in public schools expressed positive interest in Magnet Schools in the Kansas City District.
  - \* Suburban families were primarily concerned about the distance their child would have to travel and whether the school would be located in a safe neighborhood.

\* Awareness was much higher among residents of the Kansas City District compared to residents of suburban areas.

6. Lack of interest in Magnet School enrollment is primarily due to parents' satisfaction with their child's current education, especially evident among private school parents and some suburban families.
7. White parents in both the K.C. District and suburban areas would not let their child travel more than thirty (30) minutes to and from school, with 15 minutes as the optimum time limit.
8. Those Magnet School programs which generate the most interest, at both the elementary and secondary levels, emphasize advanced academic studies, i.e. college prep, a gifted program, math and science emphasis and high-tech. Specialized career programs were much less popular, i.e. aviation, military and agribusiness.
9. The majority of respondents, especially those in suburban areas, were aware of the desegregation plan. However, most parents do not support the program.

\* Support was considerably lower among white families in suburban areas -- three-fourths of these parents are not in favor of desegregation.

## V. DETAILED FINDINGS

The key findings in this section are organized by issue, covering those topics discussed during the interviews. Major points are supported by specific reference to the data.

### A. Attitudes towards Current Education

Respondent's relative interest in various school-related attributes when selecting a school for their child is shown in Table V-1. Highlights from these responses are discussed below.

1. When selecting a school for their child's education, the top 3 criteria among white families are:

- \* A solid basic academic curriculum
- \* A challenging program geared for college prep
- \* A school which encourages input from the parents

These 3 attributes were very important to white families in both the KC District and suburban areas.

- \* In addition to these 3 criteria, suburban families express more concern that the child's school is located in a safe neighborhood (note that the importance of these factors relate to selection of any school, not particularly Magnet Schools)

2. Minority families in the Kansas City District are significantly less interested in a college prep program and significantly more interested in having remedial help available for a child's learning problems.

- \* However, minority, as well as white, families are mostly concerned that the child gets a good basic curriculum of reading, writing and arithmetic.

3. All families in the study expressed low interest in all day kindergarten and before/after school child care at their school. These factors have a low priority in the school selection process.

4. Suburban (white) families expressed much more interest in bussing their child to and from school than did families in the K. C. District, regardless of race.

- \* This concern was concentrated among suburban families with children in public schools.



IMPORTANCE SCORES--SCHOOL SELECTION [Table V-1]  
(in rank order of importance)

ATTRIBUTE	Suburban <u>Whites</u>	<u>KCMSD</u>	
		<u>Whites</u>	<u>Minorities</u>
Basic curriculum of 3 R's	1	1	1
Located in safe neighborhood	2	4	4
Encourages parental input	3	3	2
Has college prep program	4	2	10
Teachers have unique teaching abilities	5	6	6
Individualized instruction	6	7	7
School is reasonable distance from home	7	5	5
Strict student discipline	8	9	8
Remedial help for learning problems	9	8	3
Bussing is provided	10	12	12
Modern facilities	11	10	9
Socialize with other races and income	12	11	11
Has unique curriculum	13	14	14
All day kindergarten available	14	13	13
Before and after school child care available	15	15	15

\* Those families who feel bussing is a priority are also concerned that the school is in a safe neighborhood and a reasonable distance from home. They appear more concerned about where the school is and how the child would get there compared to white families in the city.

5. Overall, among both minorities and non-minorities, the opportunity to socialize with children of other races and incomes was of low importance when selecting a school for their child.

6. When asked to evaluate their child's current education, suburban white families who send their children to private school are extremely satisfied with their child's education and more satisfied than any other group (90% satisfied; ref. Table V-2).

\* Comparatively, 73% of suburban families in public schools are satisfied while public school families in the Kansas City District are relatively dissatisfied with their child's education. Only 37% of parents whose children attend the K.C. District express satisfaction with the District schools; the majority (63%) said the education was fair, poor or very poor.

EVALUATION OF CHILD'S CURRENT EDUCATION [Table V-2]

	TOTAL	<u>Suburban (white)</u>		<u>KC District</u>	
		PUBLIC	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE
	(606)	(340)	(39)	(182)	(45)
*Top 2 box (Exc. - V. Good)	64%	73%	90%	37%	78%
--Excellent	24	25	62	10	40
--Very Good	40	48	28	27	38
--Good	26	22	5	40	18
--Fair	9	4	5	20	4
--Poor	1	1	-	2	-
--Very Poor	1	1	-	1	-

B. Magnet School Awareness and Interest

1. Slightly over half of the survey respondents had heard of the Magnet School program. Suburban residents are much less likely to have heard of the program than city residents. In the K. C. District, a two-thirds had heard of the Magnet School program compared to only 44% of suburban residents.

AWARENESS OF THE MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAM

[Table V-3]

	<u>Suburban</u>		<u>K.C. District</u>		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>White</u>	<u>Minorities</u>
	(608)	(379)	(228)	(64)	(164)
Aware	52%	44%	64%	64%	65%
Not Aware	48	56	36	36	35

2. Respondents were asked how likely they would be to send their child to a Magnet School in the Kansas City, Missouri School District if the Magnet programs offered interested them. About one-half of all suburban (white) residents expressed positive interest in a Magnet School for their child; most of these respondents expressed tentative interest, i.e. "Probably would enroll."

- \* White families in Kansas City expressed more positive interest than their suburban counterparts; 7 out of 10 white parents in the Kansas City District indicate some form of positive interest.
- \* Within both the suburban and Kansas City Districts, those white families who are most interested in Magnet Schools already have their children in public schools. These parents also indicated less satisfaction with their current school situation than parents who were not interested in the Magnet Concept.
- \* As stated in the methodology, MIS examined the reliability of these responses given the sample sizes in this study. For the suburban white families, the 48% positive (top 2 box) response indicates a +/- 5% error at a 95% confidence; thus the response of the true population is probably 43-53% interest in Magnet Schools. Considering white families in the KC District (64 respondents) the true population's response is 59 - 81% interest (+/- 11% error at 95% confidence). Thus, we can say that 95% of the time white families within the district will be more interested than white families living in the suburban districts.

[Table V-4]

## LIKELIHOOD OF ENROLLING CHILD IN MAGNET SCHOOL

	<u>Total Sample</u> (608)	<u>Suburban</u> (380)	<u>KC District</u>	
			<u>White</u> (64)	<u>Minority</u> (164)
Definitely enroll	15%	6%	9%	38%
	>62%	>48%	>70%	>91%
Probably enroll	47	42	61	53
Probably not enroll	27	37	23	7
Definitely not enroll	11	15	6	2

[Table V-5]

## LIKELIHOOD OF ENROLLING CHILD IN MAGNET SCHOOL

	<u>SUBURBAN</u>		<u>KC DISTRICT</u>	
	<u>Public</u> (341)	<u>Private</u> (39)	<u>Public</u> (183)	<u>Private</u> (45)
Definitely enroll	6%	3%	35%	11%
	>49%	>31%	>91%	>62%
Probably enroll	43	28	56	51
Probably not enroll	37	36	8	27
Definitely not enroll	13	33	1	11



3. Lack of interest in Magnet Schools was due primarily to satisfaction with their child's current school. The second-most mentioned concern of uninterested parents was the distance their child would have to travel to a Magnet School (ref. Table V-6).

\* About 11% of the respondents said they did not want their child in the Kansas City, Missouri school system.

\* Another 10-11% of white families currently enrolled in a public school thought Magnet Schools had tuition which they could not afford.

# REASONS FOR NEGATIVE INTEREST IN MAGNET SCHOOL [Table V-6]

	SUBURBAN (white)		K.C. District
	<u>Public</u> (168)	<u>Private</u> (27)	<u>Whites</u> (19)
Satisfied with Current School	52%	74%	64%
Distance	20	-0-	16
Don't want child in KC public schools	11	11	11
Can't afford it	10	4	11
Need more information re: Magnet Schools	8	7	9
Too specialized	5	7	6
Dislike bussing	5	-0-	-0-
Poor locations	3	4	5
Racial situation in inner city	2	-0-	5
Discipline/violence	2	-0-	11
Other/miscellaneous	8	11	3

4. Probing the concern about travel time further, six out of ten families (white and non-white) want their child to travel 15 minutes or less to/from school. Much fewer (37%) said they would allow their child to commute up to 30 minutes to school. Very few were willing to let their child travel further than 30 minutes.

MAXIMUM TRAVEL TIME [Table V-7]  
PARENT WOULD ALLOW CHILD TO COMMUTE

	Total (605)	Suburban Whites (380)	KC District Whites (63)	Minorities (162)
15 minutes	59%	61%	62%	51%
30 minutes	37	36	37	40
45 minutes	3	2	2	7
1 hour	1	1	-0-	2

5. Magnet School programs which have the most appeal at both the elementary and secondary levels, are those which emphasize more advanced academic studies, such as college prep, a program for the gifted, math and science emphasis and high tech. By grade level, the themes with the highest appeal across all subgroups of the sample are listed below. The level of interest for the 4 programs not mentioned was significantly higher than interest in other programs. (For a complete listing by demographic group, refer to Table V-8 and V-9).

\* White parents in both the suburban and Kansas City districts expressed approximately the same levels of interest in these Magnet themes

#### ELEMENTARY LEVEL

##### High Interest:

1. An academic program designed to prepare students for the college bound and advanced placement curriculum in high school.
2. A program for gifted children, or those who exhibit advanced intelligence.
3. A program with a math and science concentration.
4. A Montessori program, which emphasizes individualized learning.

Low Interest:

5. A performing arts program, emphasizing fine performing and visual arts.
6. An all day kindergarten, with emphasis upon multi-cultural learning, the development of positive self-concept and enriched instruction.
7. A program with foreign language emphasis.

SECONDARY LEVEL

High Interest

1. College preparation, with advanced courses and credit for admission to a college or university.
2. A high tech program, with emphasis on computers and electronics.
3. Math, science and engineering programs.
4. Business management concentration

Moderate Interest

5. Health Sciences, to prepare the student for a career in health technology, medicine or nursing.
6. Humanities, with emphasis on language arts, sociology and psychology.
7. Visual and performing arts.

Low Interest

8. A program to prepare the student for a career in aviation.
9. Military careers, or ROTC, with emphasis on self-discipline as well as military careers.
10. Agribusiness, concentrating on management of the agricultural industry.

MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAMS  
ELEMENTARY

[Table V-8]

Level of interest (in rank order of interest)

<u>Program</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Suburban</u>	<u>KC Whites</u>
Academic-College Bound	1	1	1
Gifted program	2	2	3
Math & Science concentration	3	3	2
Montessori-individual learning	4	4	4
Performing Arts Program	5	5	6
All day kindergarten	6	7	5
Foreign language emphasis	7	6	7

MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAMS  
SECONDARY LEVEL

[Table V-9]

Level of Interest (in rank order of interest)

<u>Program</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Suburban</u>	<u>KC Whites</u>
College prep	1	1	1
High tech program	2	2	2
Math, Science, engineering	3	3	3
Business Management	4	4	5
Health Sciences	5	5	6
Humanities	6	6	4
Visual & Performing Arts	7	7	7
Aviation career prep	8	8	8
Military career prep	9	9	10
Agribusiness	10	10	9



6. MIS examined separately the responses of those families who expressed positive interest in Magnet School enrollment, i.e. they "definitely" or "probably would enroll" their child in a Magnet School. These families differed from "uninterested" families in the following ways:

- \* Interested families would allow their children to commute further to school than noninterested families.
- \* Interested families are currently less satisfied with their child's education.
- \* Although overall interest in this factor is still relatively low, it is more important to these parents that their child socialize with children of other races and incomes.
- \* Interested parents place more importance in individualized instruction, strict discipline, highly qualified teachers, a unique curriculum, child care at school and a modern facility. In addition, they are somewhat concerned about the distance their child travels to school and are more interested in bussing for their children. Overall, they appear more concerned that their child receive a better quality education than he/she is now getting.
- \* Parents interested in Magnet Schools have significantly lower incomes (\$27,000 average) compared to uninterested parents (\$36,700 average).

### C. Awareness and Opinion of Desegregation

1. Three-fourths of all respondents in the survey had heard of the desegregation plan in Kansas City, Missouri.

- \* Suburban (white) parents were significantly more aware of the plan than families (both white and minority) in the Kansas City District.
- \* Within the District, white families were less likely to have heard of desegregation than minority households.

AWARENESS OF DESEGREGATION PLAN IN KCMSD [Table V-10]

	Total Sample (608)	Suburban (whites) (380)	KC District	
			Whites (64)	Minorities (164)
Aware	74%	81%	55%	65%
Not Aware	26	19	45	35

2. Among those who are familiar with the desegregation plan, the majority do not support the program.

- \* Three-fourths of the suburban (white) families said they were "not in favor" of the plan.
- \* The most support came from District minorities (54% in favor) while more than half (57%) of the District's white families are not in favor.

OPINION OF DESEGREGATION PLAN [Table V-11]

	Total Sample (448)	Suburban (Whites) (307)	KC District	
			(Whites) (35)	(Minorities) (106)
In Favor	26%	13%	43%	59%
Not in favor	58	75	31	21
No opinion	15	12	26	20

RECOMMENDED REVISIONS IN  
THE FACILITIES RENOVATION REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE  
LONG-RANGE MAGNET SCHOOL PLAN

JULY 10, 1987

PHALE D. HALE