

Presentation on
The Board Advisory Committee's
Identification of Options for
Ensuring Racial and Cultural Balance
in School Populations
in Norwalk Public Schools

June 16, 2004

Important Dates

1963- Board adopts policy on racial balance

1980 - Report prepared on racial isolation and plan for addressing need

1997 - Last revision of the plan

2004 - Reexamination of current status

The Board of Education is committed to ensuring that the balance of students from different racial and cultural groups in each of our schools is similar to that of the total school district population for that grade span level. Over time, school populations have changed resulting in proportions that vary from this intent by larger than acceptable tolerances.



State Definition:

Since our District has a total minority population of more than 50%, racial imbalance exists when the proportion of minority students is less than 25% or more than 75% of the total school population.

UNAUDITED DATA FILE

Connecticut State Department of Education

2003 Public School Enrollment By District By Racial Imbalance Categories

Imbalance is determined pursuant to CGS10-226e-3 & 10-226e-4, comparing school proportions with the district proportions of students in the same grade. Note: **Bold-faced** fonts indicate the greater of the district or school minority percentage figures for each school

Dist #	Schl#	DISTRICT	SCHOOL	District %	Dist Total	School %	School Total	Absolute
				Minority		Minority		Imbalance
103	Norwalk School District							
	63	Briggs High School		51.39%	3201	81.90%	105	30.51
	7	Jefferson Elementary School		55.60%	5176	74.63%	402	19.02
	8	Kendall Elementary School		55.03%	5310	70.91%	519	15.88
	23	Silvermine Elementary School		55.60%	5176	70.87%	484	15.26
	13	Rowayton Elementary School		55.60%	5176	40.89%	384	14.72
	21	Naramake Elementary School		55.03%	5310	40.87%	389	14.15
	4	Cranbury Elementary School		55.03%	5310	41.41%	483	13.62
	20	Fox Run Elementary School		55.03%	5310	41.81%	507	13.21
	2	Brookside Elementary School		55.03%	5310	65.68%	437	10.65
	22	Marvin Elementary School		55.03%	5310	44.70%	519	10.33
	61	Norwalk High School		51.39%	3201	41.80%	1689	9.59
	62	Brien McMahon High School		51.39%	3201	60.63%	1407	9.24
	14	Tracey Elementary School		55.03%	5310	63.89%	468	8.86
	52	Nathan Hale Middle School		57.30%	2597	51.53%	619	5.76
	3	Columbus Elementary School		55.60%	5176	49.86%	353	5.74
	55	Roton Middle School		57.30%	2597	62.65%	514	5.35
	53	Ponus Ridge Middle School		57.30%	2597	61.12%	679	3.82
	24	Wolfpit Elementary School		55.03%	5310	51.78%	365	3.25
	54	West Rocks Middle School		57.30%	2597	55.03%	785	2.27

Connecticut Statute (§226c)

Any Board of Education receiving notification of the existence of racial imbalance as specified in §10-226b shall forthwith prepare a plan to correct such imbalance and file a copy of said plan with the State Board of Education. Said plan may be limited to addressing the imbalance existing at any school and need not result in a district-wide plan or district-wide pupil reassignment.

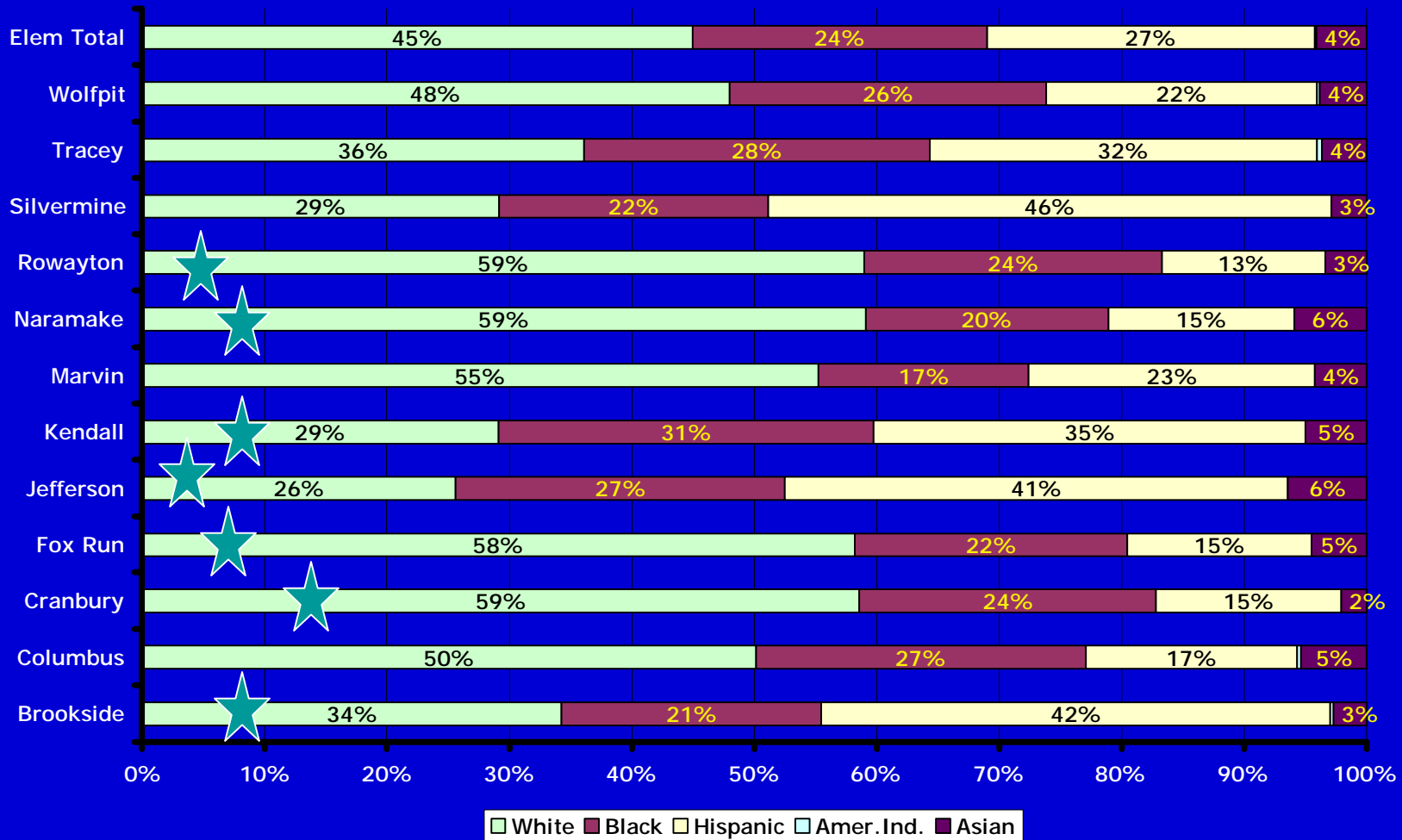
Required Action:

- A plan for correcting the imbalance must be filed within 120 days from the date of notification by the State. This does not mean implementation of a plan within 120 days but a plan that describes our course of action. What we are currently doing would essentially meet the State requirement, if we received official notification of an imbalance situation.
- The State Education Department is available for assistance.
- The requirement for filing a plan must be met or the State Education Department will file a complaint against the District with the State Attorney General. Ultimately, the issue could be referred to the courts if the district does not comply with the statute.

Board Plan for Racial Balance:

To have all schools not deviate from the system wide mean for each minority or cultural group for that grade span by plus or minus 10 percentage points.

Comparison of Elementary Schools by Race and Cultural Groups Against District



What the Board Did...

Formed a committee whose charge is to:

- 1. Examine the existing school populations**
- 2. Project school populations forward using available demographic data**
- 3. Identify where intervention might be needed**
- 4. Review and examine options with respect to**
 - w Educational Program**
 - w Financial Considerations**
 - w Family Impact**
 - w Needed Facilities**
 - w Necessary Staffing**
 - w Timeline for Implementation**
- 5. Present these options to the Board**
- 6. Analyze Elementary, Middle and High Schools**

Where We Are in the Process

- The committee has presented its report identifying options for consideration for elementary schools.
- The Board is conducting a series of informational meetings for the public to create understanding about the options and to hear community reaction and suggestions.
- No action has been taken or decision made about any option.
- No changes will be implemented any sooner than 2006/2007.
- Depending on the choice that is made, implementation will be on a gradual basis, most likely one grade each year beginning with kindergarten
- The decision could include any of the presented options, a hybrid of one or more, or an option that might yet emerge.

Potential Timeline

November, 2004 - Community Informational Meetings concluded

March, 2005 - Financial analysis of potential options concluded

June, 2005 - Board decision made about course of action to be followed

2005/2006 School Year - Planning for implementation

2006/2007 School Year - Begin implementation

Diffusing the rumor mill...

- Rowayton elementary school will not close.
- There is no evidence in any of the places where any of these options have been implemented that property values have fallen.
- No decision has been made by the Board of Education to implement any of the three new options identified by the committee. One of these options is currently in place!

Work of the Committee

Committee Membership

- 2 Central Office
- 3 Administrators
- 5 PTO/Parent Representatives
- 5 Citizens
- 3 Teachers

The Committee

Chairman: David Cole

Vice-Chair: Julianne B. Ross

Secretary: Katherine May

Greg Burnett

Lorraine Cafero

D.J. Carey

Jenna Chrzanowski

Lindsay Curtis

Chris Griffith

Paul Krasnavage

Curtis Law

Pat Lawler

Liza Montgomery

Bruce Morris

Brenda Penn-Williams

John Tobin

Peter Torrano

The Options:

1. Continue Existing Plan
2. Develop Magnet Schools
3. Institute a Modified Parental Choice
4. Organize the elementary schools using a “Princeton Plan” model

The Norwalk Public Schools
EXISTING PLAN

Background

- 1980 response to state requiring compliance
- Desegregation Plan described in:
“The Report and Plan to Reduce Racial Isolation in the Norwalk Public Schools for 1963 – 1984”

Plan Description

Provide maximum educational opportunity for Norwalk students through:

1. The redistricting of school attendance areas;
 2. The design of a school feeder structure, and
 3. The discontinuation and/or conversion of specified schools which includes the creation of a magnet school
- Stated Objectives (10% +/- median for grade span)
 - Plan to be monitoring and revised as needed
 - Accountability lies with the Board

Educational Program

- Curriculum consistent across the district
- Comparable Facilities
- Programmatic needs addressed annually in the school budget

Financial Considerations

- Busing
- Social workers
- Diversity materials and training



Impact on Families

- Neighborhood Schools except for children in South Norwalk
- Parent Participation
- Sense of local school community
- Affects all students but only South Norwalk students are assigned to specific schools
- Some Level of Choice
- Out of District Students



Facilities Implications



- Under/Over Utilized Schools
- Variance in Class Sizes from school to school
- Requires the Equitable Distribution of Funds

Staffing Considerations

Increase or decrease each year based on enrollment.



Needed Timeline for Implementation

In place, but requires improved
monitoring

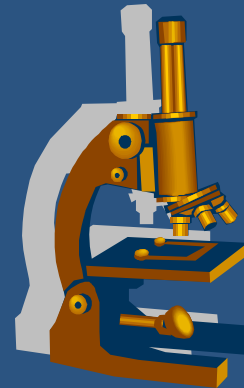
MAGNET SCHOOL OPTION

Magnet Schools

- School follows a theme, identified by the school community, around which the program is built
- Voluntary attendance by students
- Program responsive to students' interests and learning styles
- Empowerment by choice of
 - Parents
 - Teachers
 - Administrators

Examples of Magnet Themes

- Arts
- Career/Vocational
- Communications
- Instructional Style
- Science
- Technology



Educational Program



- Follows the State's academic framework
- Follows the District's curriculum
- Special emphasis on theme related programs or instruction

Financial Considerations

Usually more expensive than traditional schools

- Staffing costs
- Professional development
- Higher transportation costs
- Public relations expenses
- Facilities and supply costs

Funding Opportunities

Federal Magnet School Assistance Program

- Highly competitive
- Up to \$4 million per year
- Planning, staff development, writing curriculum, equipment, external staff

State Voluntary Public School Choice Program

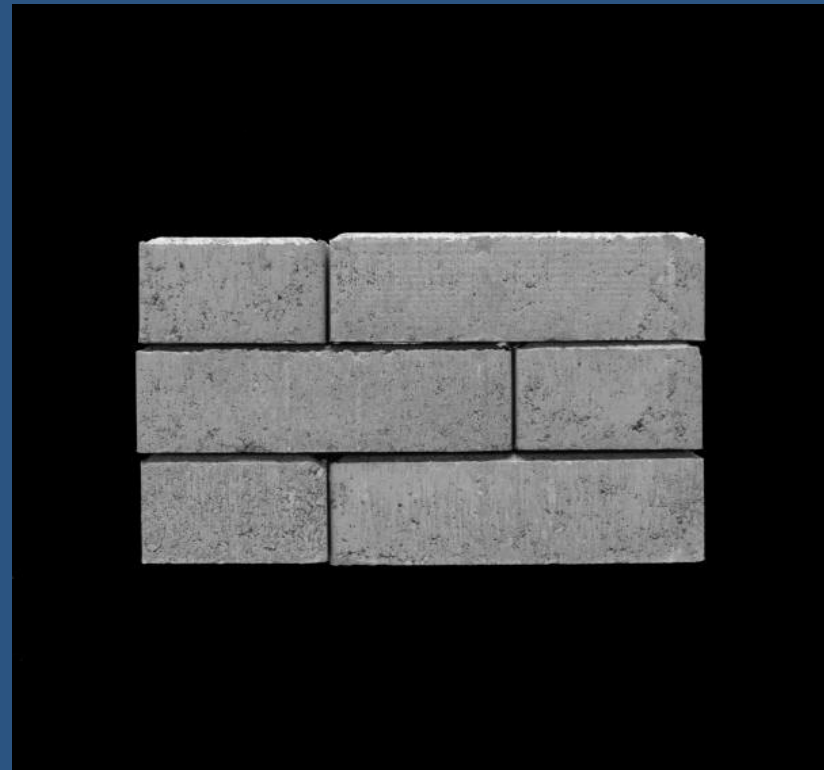
- Awarded to larger districts – consortiums
- Aimed at AYP schools
- One year planning, transportation, enhancing capacity, tuition transfer payments

Impact on Families

- Provides parental choice for all families
- Families could have children in different schools
- Some are uncomfortable with a process of student selection by lottery balanced by race and background
- Potential loss of sense of community

Facility Implications

- Must be a match between physical plant and intended theme
- Possible modification costs depending on school theme



Staffing Considerations

- Contractual obligations must be met
- Recruitment of teachers who volunteer to teach in the magnet school
- Usually a lower student/adult ratio than the rest of the district
- Professional development costs
- May need specialized staffing

MODIFIED PARENTAL CHOICE PLAN

Process

- Parents select a school, indicating first, second and third choice
- Choice is based on:
 - school visitation,
 - informational brochures,
 - location,
 - reputation,
 - programs
- Sibling priority
- Implement with each incoming kindergarten class

Process (continued)

- Racial balance of incoming class is determined
- Students are placed according to parent choice and available seats
- School enrollments reflect district percentages by race and cultural background

Educational Program

- Core curriculum is the the same across the district
- Some schools may wish to identify strengths



Financial Considerations

- Transportation
- District Registration Center
- Registration Center Staff
- Faculty or Staff of Individual Schools

Impact on Families



- Travel time
- Sibling priority
- Benefit to transient families
- Parents could receive first, second, or third choice

Facility Implications

None required

Staffing Considerations

- School faculty and staff conform to contract requirements
- Registration Center staff needed



Sample Timeline for Implementation

January-February	Develop registration procedures; schools will develop information\brochures
March	Parent meetings to discuss visitation and registration procedures
April	School visitations
May	Parental school selection
June	Communicate school assignments

Advantages of Parental Choice Plan

- Equalize class sizes
- Equity in choice
- Empower and involve parents
- Educational benefit to transient students
- Mechanism in place to permanently balance school populations that takes into account changing demographic of the city



Disadvantages of Parental Choice Plan

- Transportation costs
- Cannot guarantee first choice, although most people get it
- Imbalance of Hispanic population at Silvermine because of Mano-a-Mano program.

“THE PRINCETON PLAN”

A Grade-Configuration Option

Princeton

Circa 1947



African American
students attended one
school

Students from the Witherspoon School for colored children.

Princeton

Circa 1947



White students
attended another
school.

Students from the all white Nassau Street School

The Princeton Plan

is an organizational school structure where school attendance areas are combined and the schools in that area are organized with a narrow number of grades. All the children in the new attendance area attend one school for lower grades and one school for upper grades. Some districts use this structure exclusively for educational and financial reasons. Others use it to ensure racial balance in the district.

Educational Program

- Core curriculum is the the same across the district
- Collaboration between paired schools
- Strengthens Professional Development because of larger number of teachers in a grade level residing in one school
- Magnet Programs will continue

Columbus School – Bank Street Model

Silvermine – Maño-a-Maño Program

Financial Considerations

- Continuation of annual Capital improvement budget under current plan
- Continuation of annual Operating budget with awareness of this option
- Transportation Costs
- Possible Staffing Decrease

Impact on Families

- Transportation
- Reduce competitiveness
- Identification with elementary school is now with two buildings
- Students change schools after three years
- Could limit parent involvement if children are in more than one school

Facility Implications

- Review facilities for “pairing” – compatibility
- Review physical designs and age/special needs of students
- Present facility capacities should be essentially sufficient with the possibility of some additional workspace in some buildings
- May need minor revisions in attendance area boundaries

Staffing Considerations

- Could result in fewer staff
- Grade Configuration Possibilities become more likely
 - Looping
 - Multi-Age
- Making a shift or change in staffing might need additional training for the school or grade staff will teach.