

Islesboro School Committee
ICS Magnet School Program Review
November 18, 2014

MAGNET SCHOOL PROGRAM REVIEW - FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose for conducting the Magnet School Program Review was to:

- Review and clarify the intended purpose of the Magnet School Program Policy;
- Collect and review information that provides insight regarding the financial, academic, and social impact of the Magnet School Program on ICS;
- Make informed changes in the Magnet School Program policy and procedures;
- Communicate to the Islesboro community information about the Magnet School Program.

FINDINGS

#1 Review and clarify the intended purpose of the Magnet School Program

The Islesboro School Committee reviewed the Magnet School Program Policy (IHBHB) that was adopted on June 10, 1997. The primary intent of this policy focused on maintaining a quality educational program at ICS by ensuring that “sufficient numbers of students attend the Islesboro Central School to provide for spirited classroom discussions, appropriate student to student interaction, several points of view and competition among students.” This policy also states that the establishment of the Magnet School Program “will be implemented with the understanding that there will be no net increase in cost to the island’s taxpayers.”

The school committee also reviewed Policy JFAB – Admission of Non-Resident Students. This policy establishes procedures for the admission and retention of non-resident students, which includes Magnet School Program students. These procedures are currently be used at ICS and are included in the ICS Student Handbook.

The Islesboro School Committee believes the initial intent of both policies is being met by the current Magnet School Program.

#2 Collect and review information that provides insight regarding the financial, academic, and social impact of the Magnet School Program on ICS

Academic and Social Impact

Information was solicited from ICS teachers and staff regarding the academic and social impact that the Magnet School Program had on ICS and its students. (See ICS Teacher and Staff Feedback – October 14, 2014) Feedback from staff was overwhelming positive, noting that the Magnet School Program provides for a more engaging and challenging classroom atmosphere for student learning. Teachers stated that with the additional Magnet School Program students, they can conduct more varied classroom learning activities such as debates, mock trials, group projects and discussions.

ICS teachers and staff also had overwhelming praise regarding the social impact that the Magnet School Program students have on ICS students. Magnet students appropriately assimilate into the social fabric of ICS, making life-long friends with island students. The families of Magnet students are also engaged in in their children’s learning and are supportive of ICS activities.

The only concerns expressed by ICS teachers and staff dealt with the potential impact that the enrollment of Magnet student might have on ICS class size. These concerns focused on the limited space in ICS classrooms and ICS's ability to expand course offerings.

The school committee finds that the Magnet School Program enhances the quality of the ICS academic programming and classroom instruction, while enriching students' social and personal relationships with students.

Financial Impact

Information relating to state and Magnet Student tuition rates and costs were reviewed (See Magnet School Program Financial Information). Although Magnet School Program 13/14 tuition cost for a secondary student (\$5,256) is about 60% of state average tuition cost (\$9,209) for a secondary student, the Magnet tuition cost for a secondary student is significantly more than the estimated cost (\$1,121) for adding a Magnet student to the ICS enrollment. The overall costs of the Magnet Program shows there are no increased costs to Islesboro taxpayers because of this program. Although concerns have been expressed by some island residents that ICS taxpayers are subsidizing the Magnet School Program, it appears that, overall, the Magnet School Program tuition revenue minus estimated costs for Magnet students will generate additional revenue of \$78,970 for the 14/15 school year.

It was noted in ICS teacher and staff feedback that raising tuition costs for Magnet students might have a negative impact on the number of Magnet students attending ICS and may result in an increasing socio-economic gap between island and Magnet students. It was also mentioned that a loss in Magnet HS students may affect the long term viability for maintaining high school program.

The school committee, although sensitive to community concerns about tuition rates, believes that present Magnet tuitions rates are fair and appropriate. Any significant increase in tuitions rates may have unintended negative consequences on the quality and viability of the Magnet School Program.

Recommendations

1. Make revisions to the Magnet School Program Policy (IHBHB) that: 1. clarifies Magnet Student enrollment e.g. grades 5-12, 2. revises policy language that may be inappropriate ("competition among students", and 3. adds information regarding when Magnet School Program tuition rates are determined.
2. Establish guidelines for Magnet School Program student enrollment e.g. establishes overall number of Magnet students enrolled at ICS.
3. Continue to use the current formula for determining tuition rates for Magnet students. Currently the annual increase on the Magnet Student tuition is the same yearly % increase on the Islesboro School budget.
4. Post all information related to the Magnet School Program Review on the ICS web site. This information will include: Magnet School Program Review, ICS Teacher and Staff Feedback – October 14, 2014, Magnet School Program Financial Information, Magnet School Program Review – Findings and Recommendations, and Magnet School Program Policy IHBHB.