

 **VIGNETTE: Developing More Effective Recruitment**

Purpose: Your evaluation findings can be used to shape policy at both the school and district level. Winston-Salem staff used their evaluation results to persuade district- and school-level personnel to help develop more effective ways to recruit families to magnet schools. Their experience may inform recruitment practices or other aspects of your magnet program.

Source: Interview with Kim Morrison, Magnet School Program Manager with the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools, NC, July 24, 2008.

Questions for Reflection

1. How were the findings used to make changes in marketing and recruitment practices at district and site levels? What advantages might there be in making change at both the site and district level?
2. Given your evaluation questions and the likely responses, are there evaluation results that are more likely to result in districtwide policy changes? Might they be more effectively used to influence policy at the site level?
3. What process will you use to discuss your findings and make changes in policy or practice?



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Background: *Kim Morrison is the Magnet School Program Manager for the Winston-Salem Public Schools, NC, which received Magnet Schools Assistance Program (MSAP) funding in 2004 and 2007. In this interview, Morrison describes how the district used 2004 evaluation findings and initial results from 2007, on district progress using recruitment to reduce minority isolation. These findings shaped the magnet school recruitment policies for 2007.*

In the last grant cycle, we were not having a lot of luck with reducing minority isolation. We were not attracting a lot of majority or white students at first. So we said, okay, let's look at our marketing and recruiting plan. We looked not just at the one school but at the districtwide choice plan. After developing a plan that addressed these recruitment patterns, we talked to the superintendent and board and got them to commit to allow the magnet marketing and application period to be scheduled before every other choice. We allowed everybody who applied for a magnet school to get into those schools and we enrolled them first. So, then the next year, we started meeting the goals. We started getting more majority students and we started getting them to commit earlier. Now, we have already met our minority and majority goals for the first year at two of the three schools in our magnet program. So that is one example of how we used that recruitment data to make a districtwide policy change. We also used recruitment data at the school level.

At the end of the year, we got our data back from our external evaluator, which showed the marketing and recruiting as well as other core data. So, we sat down with all three of the new schools and showed them their data. I already mentioned we easily met targets with two of the three schools in the new grant cycle. But this one school is one of the toughest schools in the district and one of the hardest to turn around. So, we sat down with them and we said you've recruited 20 kids, which is way under the other two schools that recruited over 250 each. But, of the 20 new students they recruited, 18 were white. That doubled the number of white students in the school!

We know that the numbers are still low but we looked collaboratively at what was done with marketing and recruiting. We went back over every single marketing and recruiting event that they had in their action plan and we said this and this worked, this other concept did not work. It turned out the night that they had dinner with current and prospective families worked best. They all came together and they all dialogued. It created a situation in which there was diversity with whites and Hispanics and blacks and they all interacted with each other. And so we had 18 folks who were able to say we are going take a chance on this school.

What we found last cycle is once you get a cohort of kids in there, then that begins to build up momentum and you can just continue to reduce the minority isolation. So based on what we learned about the success of the dinners, we decided to look at the group that's underrepresented and create opportunities to talk to them specifically and give them some feedback about why they would want to come to this school. And even though we may have fewer marketing and recruiting activities next year, we will probably impact more parents.

So all the changes we made were based on some of these evaluation data we were getting back.