

Magnet Schools in the 21st Century: Viable Integration Strategies or Sites of Segregation?

EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable

Dr. Sarah Diem, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Missouri

TRANSCRIPTION

Robin J: Good afternoon, all. We are going to go ahead and get started for the sake of time. My name is Robin Jackson. I'm the Products Coordinator here with the Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center, or the MAP Center. I'm serving as your host and technical director. Today's Virtual Roundtable is entitled *Magnet Schools in the 21st Century: Viable Integration Strategies or Sites of Segregation?* This Virtual Roundtable will provide a clear understanding of magnet school admissions policies, discuss the pros and cons of magnet school admissions policies, and how or whether they will still work as an integration strategy, and provide recommendations for school districts considering adopting magnet school admissions policies. Please consider this time an informal space to share your thoughts and insights, leverage learning from our other educators, and to ask questions. During today's roundtable, we align to the four commitments when discussing the topic. First, stay engaged. Second, experience discomfort. Third, speak your truth. Lastly, expect and accept non-closure.

Erin S: Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Erin Sanborn. I'm a Doctoral Research Assistant at the Midwest and Plains Equity Center. I'll be serving as the assistant technical director today. Please feel free during the Virtual Roundtable to send me chat messages directly if you are having any connectivity difficulties. EquiLearn Virtual Roundtables are intended to be interactive. Participants are asked to interact in real-time via our teleconferencing format. However, to reduce noise, we ask that all participants mute their microphones when they are not speaking. Lastly, the video camera function has been turned on. If you have a webcam and you would like to join us, please feel free to do so by clicking the camera icon at the lower right corner of your screen. Again, please don't forget to mute your microphone when speaking. Feel free to send any questions in the chat box, and

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we'll be continuing the conversation after the EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable on our social media, which we'll remind you about again at the end. Thank you.

- Robin J:** I am very pleased to introduce our roundtable facilitator. Dr. Sarah Diem is an associate professor of educational policy and leadership at the University of Missouri and an Equity Fellow for the MAP center. Her research focuses on the socio, political, and geographic contexts of education, paying particular attention to how politics, leadership, and implementation of educational policies affects outcomes related to equity, opportunity, and racial diversity within public schools. Welcome, Dr. Diem.
- Dr. Diem:** Thanks so much, Robin. Thank you everyone for joining us today. I'm really looking forward to the conversation. And as Erin mentioned, I really hope that this next hour that we have together will be interactive and engaging. So definitely don't be shy to either send your questions in the chat box or to participate via video. Yeah, just really want to reiterate that active participation. I'm going to have some discussion questions intentionally placed throughout the presentation for you all to consider and respond to, but again, please don't hesitate to share any additional thoughts that you may have as it related to our conversation today.
- Dr. Diem:** So I thought it would be helpful to start our conversation today by briefly providing some background information around the history of magnet schools just to kind of lay a foundation for our discussion. So just briefly ... and I think this is particularly relevant in the current context, the current school choice context that we're in.
- Dr. Diem:** Magnet schools are really one of the oldest forms of schools choice. They've been operating for more than four decades across U.S. cities, and they really emerged as a school desegregation strategy in the 1970s. They offered specialized curriculum and programs that weren't really available in neighborhood schools.

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They attracted students from diverse backgrounds across traditional school boundaries. Really, the theory behind magnet schools is by drawing students from different neighborhoods that the magnet schools will attract students from different backgrounds, which will then result in diverse learning environments.

Dr. Diem: Currently, there are about 3,000 magnets across 600 U.S. school districts and serving about 2.6 million students. In the 1990s, with court rulings, it really weakened or ended desegregation efforts. Some of these rulings included desegregation as it related to magnet schools. Magnets really just became another form of school choice without desegregation goals attached to them.

Dr. Diem: So as we're seeing over time, magnet schools are becoming less desegregated, and research is really mixed when it comes to whether they're promoting racial and socioeconomic diversity. I've seen some research that shows that White families are choosing magnet schools with higher percentages of White students, while other research shows that by drawing students to magnet schools across boundaries, this is really helping to mitigate school segregation.

Dr. Diem: In the current context, as I mentioned before, we're really seeing this expansion of school choice. Magnet schools and the way they're designed become really even more critical in trying to address the existent racial and socioeconomic segregation that we're seeing in our public schools.

Dr. Diem: We're going to talk a little bit more about this later, but I think it's important to remember that today, magnets do not guarantee diversity, and in some cases they're doing the opposite, and many magnet schools have been established without the goals of desegregation in mind. This really connects to why we're here for the roundtable today and the title of roundtable with magnets being viable integration strategies for sites of segregation.

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Dr. Diem: So in our next slide, this is where I want to start getting some participation, hopefully, from the audience. I have three questions up here that I'd like you all to consider. The first question is what do you know about the historical context around school desegregation in your district? It connects to the second question on how has this context impacted magnet schools over time in your district? So I'd be real curious to hear from anyone, whether in their district community perhaps they had magnet schools at one point and then they went away, or maybe they're seeing magnet schools proliferating in their school district in more contemporary times. So I think that would be a good conversation to have with all of you.

Dr. Diem: Then the third one is, as we all know, demographics are changing in our communities, our schools. In 2014, it was the first time when the majority of students attending our public schools are students of Color. So I would really be interested in hearing how have changing demographics impacted your district's efforts around desegregation and magnet schools? So I want to leave it open and hopefully we'll get some questions in the chat box or if anyone wants to speak up and respond to the questions.

Robin J: I can kick us off, Sarah. So I was a part of desegregation efforts here in Indianapolis in the Indianapolis Public Schools. Of course, I didn't know what was happening then, but retrospectively, I remember being in the fifth grade and I lived in an urbanized area on the east side of Indianapolis, and I was bused 40 minutes there and back to what we call township schools in more suburban areas. It was super fascinating. I remember being a kid wondering why is it taking so long to get back and forth to school? It also affected by ability to be able to participate in anything in the school, because I didn't come from a family where we had ready transportation, so whatever was happening at the school, if it was something after school or any type of extra-curriculars, I couldn't be a part of it. It seemed, now

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that I'm looking at it with a critical eye, it was done just for the optics for the mixture, however you want to put it, to be sure that we had this majority Black area bused out to the school that was in the majority White area.

Dr. Diem: Yeah, that's a really good point. My colleague Sonya Horsford ... she just wrote a piece about who's integration is it, she was asking. She talks about what does integration really mean now in the current context, like I was saying earlier, when for the first time in history the majority of students attending public schools are students of Color. So how do we think about magnet schools today? Particularly when we see, like I referenced earlier, some research showing that some of these magnet schools are segregated racially, because they're not designed with diversity in mind like they were once doing. So thank you for sharing that with us.

Erin S: We have a couple of messages in the chat. I apologize, because I really don't want to incorrectly pronounce anyone's name. So I would love it if either of you wanted to speak to your points out loud, but I'm glad to read them, also. The first I know is from, I believe, the superintendent in one of our township districts here ... Please speak up and correct me if I have that wrong ...who mentioned that currently they have magnet schools based on their school calendar. So there's six elementary schools that have traditional calendars and three that have longer breaks throughout the year.

Dr. Diem: So I'm curious then to how that works. I'd love to hear some more details on that.

Flora: So this is Flora Reichanadter ... I'm the person who wrote that. MSD Pike Township here in Indianapolis. So originally that began probably about 13 years ago, 14 years ago in which three of the elementary schools were basically year round. So the kids went to school nine weeks, off three, on nine. It has evolved over the last several years into almost a very similar calendar, with the exception

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of two weeks at fall break and two weeks in spring. But we're looking to join to a single calendar and want to be careful that when we do so, what would that look like? Our school board would like us to continue to have the three choice elementary schools and one choice middle, but I just don't think having such a close calendar makes sense for me. So we're struggling with trying to decide if we were to do a magnet program, what would it be and how would we ensure that it was an equitable opportunity for everyone who would apply? Or a waiting list if necessary.

Dr. Diem: So how do you ... what do your admissions policies look like right now for those magnet schools?

Flora: So, right now, you would fill out the paperwork and go into a lottery, but for the most part, there is not a problem getting into any of the schools. They do tend to favor a more higher socioeconomic group at first, because they tend to be the ones that will receive communication, look at it, know that you have to apply for it. So my fear is if we were to move into a magnet school, I want to make sure that it's equitable for all and not just the population of parents who know how to play that communication game with schools.

Dr. Diem: Right, yeah. You hit on some really important points. We're going to talk about later, but of course we can talk about it now, too. Outreach and marketing, how important that is to get the word out for magnet schools and disseminating information via multiple platforms, multiple languages, not doing everything just through the internet or the computer, because we know not everyone has access to that, going out into the community, having meetings at different times of the day and on the weekends, to provide assistance with the admissions process. Also, that admissions process you were talking about being lottery based. There's research that also shows that if you want a diverse magnet school, lottery based is

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better rather than having it be competitive based, but are you using a weighted lottery? So are you looking at student demographics, are you looking at demographics of the neighborhood that could help increase diversity in the magnet school?

- Flora:** Well, currently, the way we have it set up is the district has nine elementaries, they're divided into groups of three. So any group of three is one magnet. So the students who attend the magnet live in the boundaries of the other two [crosstalk 00:16:13] ...
- Dr. Diem:** Yeah, that's a good question. I guess my final question would maybe be that magnet that's in that zone, when you say it's a lottery, are you looking to have a certain percentage of students from diverse backgrounds or are you just saying if you apply, you can get in?
- Flora:** Currently, it's based on if you apply, and mostly because in some of the cases, in the majority of cases with the exception of a few grade levels, at the beginning of the year everybody who wants in gets in. But if everything was full, right now it would be the lottery is everybody in the lottery. It's not specific guidelines.
- Dr. Diem:** Yeah, yeah. That might be something worth revisiting to see if you can add some more specificity to those admissions policies. But thank you so much for your question. Was there another one? I think I just heard someone.
- Erin S:** There was another comment. I actually was going to make a similar comment. I worked ... not to co-opt ... this person's comment ... but I worked in Philadelphia and then here in Indianapolis. This person said, "There seems to be a boom in charter schools while the number of magnet schools is not really changing." I worked at a magnet school in Indianapolis, and from my biased lens, it seemed to

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be a catalyst to ignite the school choice movement and then increase the amount of charter schools, ultimately. Not in isolation by itself, not my particular building, but that's both the direction I saw Philadelphia and then Indianapolis move into.

Dr. Diem: Yeah. Again, all you guys are kind of leading to some other stuff we have in future slides, but yeah, one of these tensions around desegregation and how magnet schools are functioning today is because of the school choice movement and this market driven approach to education where we are seeing more charter schools and there's more competition. So yes, I can see where you've seen that in your experience. Any other questions? Maybe that last one, anyone speak to how changing demographics perhaps have impacted your district's efforts around desegregation in magnet schools?

Erin S: If it's okay, I can ... in the particular building I worked in, and this maybe doesn't answer your question, but it was an interesting demographic shift for that particular building. Pre-magnet was predominantly Black/African American students and family student body. Then with the shifting into a magnet, became, if you will, increasingly more diverse in the sense that the white and Latinx population were increasing. However, over the course of ten years in that building, you can see the demographic of the Black/African American student body drastically declined. It almost became invisible compared to, especially in that space of the city of the Latinx population.

Dr. Diem: So the population was declining in the school, you were saying, or in the ...

Erin S: In that particular ... in that magnet school, which was one of the earlier magnet schools of the city.

Robin J: Erin, someone wants to know where in Philadelphia you're referencing.

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Erin S: Yeah, I worked for the school district of Philadelphia. I worked in several different buildings in ... I worked in four different, two in north Philly, one on the east side of Philly, and then finally in south Philadelphia. But just in the time I worked there from the years of 2007 until 2011, and during that time the dialogue surrounding ... you saw a shift from the dialogue being the magnet school process and students ... especially I worked in middle school applying to the magnet school high schools to then the influx of charters coming in. Two of the buildings I worked at became charters. So again, it might be a personal bias, because I was living the experience of two buildings being shifted to charter schools. So it was heavy in professional circles I was in, the conversation.

Dr. Diem: Right. And you were in a context, too, where school closure was huge in Philadelphia. I think that's something part of this conversation, too, and while the other person talked about the boom in charter schools. I think a lot of that ... sometimes schools close and they don't reopen, charter schools pop up in their place. So we have to think about that in this conversation as well.

Barry: I'll go ahead and jump in. Can you hear me?

Dr. Diem: Yes.

Barry: So I'm in Omaha, Nebraska. We have a rather large urban school district, but speaking of the trends as far as the demographics, our demographic shift has been a lot of our wealthier, or more specifically, to speak about demographics of our White families, are moving to the suburban areas around the city. So we have a majority minority. I hate that phrasing, but most people understand it when I say it. Our school district is largely Brown and then also about a 25% ... it's about 33% Latinx, 25% Black, 25% White, and then we have a huge refugee and migrant population that we serve. Well over 100 languages that are spoken within our

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school district. So as our demographics have shifted to become one that is more welcoming toward populations of English learners and then also a number of the individuals that were ... a lot of families that had been in the city have moved to the suburbs, that I think has some impact on the popularity or the use of magnet programs. I think you have a lot more local families going to the schools in their area based off of just proximity.

Barry: Then when you add in the fact that we've also had an impact in regards to funding. We've gotten rid of transportation in some cases where you can't necessarily navigate from one elementary zone to a different elementary zone in a different part of the city, or middle school zone to another middle school zone in a different part of the city. That also has had an impact on whether or not magnets are as utilized, or utilized as well as they had been during the 1980s and 1990s. So demographics is a factor I think in some ways when it comes to magnets, but I also think that there's some economic factors, specifically with, again, population shifts to a wealthier area going to the suburbs and then also with funding that the district is receiving from the state also is having an impact on the ability of individuals to migrate from different areas of the city to a magnet that might not necessarily be where they're ... in closer proximity.

Dr. Diem: So Barry, are you guys seeing ... are magnets popular? Are people wanting to go to the magnet schools?

Barry: Really, we've got enough to where it depends on the interest. So we have a very, very popular science, technology, engineering, mathematics magnet, that's a huge draw for the schools that are focused on that, because there's been such a narrative nationally that focus is on STEM, whereas we've got some other magnets that ... another part I should say in regards to the magnet piece is we've got one school that is a magnet program but it is busting out of the seams with

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kids. The natural population from the area makes it such to where you couldn't possibly squeeze another kid into that school even if it was for magnet purposes. So that also has had an impact where the magnets are placed, also leads to what availability based off of just population booms in certain parts of the city. It also limits the amount of space that you can hold for magnet students to go to a particular school, because if the school is already a grossly high population, then how are you going to tell someone that that's their homeschool open the spot for some of magnet kids to come.

Dr. Diem: Yeah. Also, and I don't know if Omaha is experiencing this like some other cities, I wonder how gentrification, too ... So you talked about white families moving out to the suburbs, but then I wonder White families moving to the city, how that's maybe playing a role in this as well.

Barry: Yeah, and typically-

Cheryl L: This is Cheryl Logan. Hi, how are you? Hi, Barry.

Barry: Hey, Doc.

Cheryl L: We don't really have gentrification, not like ... I came from Philadelphia. I was there for five years as the Chief Academic Officer. We do not have gentrification like you would talk about gentrification more broadly in a Philadelphia or in other cities. The gentrification we have here is typically young people moving back in childless. As a matter of fact, many of the apartment complexes that are getting zoning permits are building studios, one bedroom at the most. They may build a sprinkle of two bedroom apartments. So they're not necessarily going to attract large families. We have choice in Nebraska, so you can option into other districts and no, charters are not a part of the portfolio here in Nebraska. So you have the

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typical flight issues. The flight is mostly middle and upper middle class. It is largely Caucasian, because that is what is here, who is middle and upper income who can take advantage of the optioning and there's not necessarily transportation to the option, so that's a part of our profile here in Nebraska.

Dr. Diem: Yeah, I know a little bit about the ... I did some research on the learning community.

Cheryl L: Yeah, I actually read your research, so that's great. I'll give you a shout-out.

Dr. Diem: Yeah, thank you.

Ingrid A: This is Ingrid Aasan. I am with a regional program working out of the twin cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul in Minnesota. I thought I would just talk a little bit about our programs here. We find I think it depends on the type of magnet or what the magnet is. I think we have greater diversity in our music and performing arts magnets. However, I think prior educated white families tend to be the majority in our STEM magnet schools and also in our language immersion schools. We fear in the twin cities have an enormous amount of Somali immigrants and find that while I think a lot of those students might benefit from a number of magnet programs, the immigration status of their parents and just the overwhelming factors of being an immigrant I think prevent the participation. Or even like you guys talked about earlier, the knowledge and just the wherewithal in getting registered, getting on lists, those types of things. So I think that's a barrier.

Ingrid A: I think also then speaking more to the Somali immigrant population and then also other cultural groups here, word gets out very quickly about charter programs or charter schools that might feel welcoming to a certain community, and so I think they might migrate towards that quite a bit. So I think that ... I'm trying to look at

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my notes here. Good or bad, a magnet school versus a charter school might have a different reputation, or just in our case, feel smaller, which might feel more welcoming, which might feel less intimidating to some of these new families. So just some thoughts.

Dr. Diem: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah. No, this is all ... this is great. We have a few more slides to get to with some other questions, so I think we're just going to, for the sake of time, move on, but certainly if you guys have more to share or more questions, feel free to let us know. We kind of talked about what's on this next slide around tensions magnet schools are currently facing and how they're functioning. School choice, you all shared with, too, charter schools popping up as well. So this kind of ... Amy Wells talks about the shifting sociopolitical context from equity to accountability and market-driven approaches. We're really in that context in our schools today. Racial and socioeconomic diversity is not always prioritized in admissions criteria for magnet schools. So those were some of the questions I was kind of getting at earlier. What are the admissions policies for magnet schools? Because when racial and socioeconomic diversity aren't included, this can result in less integrated schools.

Dr. Diem: Then finally, and we're going to get to this, too, and I'd like to hear your thoughts around ... I think it's central to this. The design and focus of magnet school policy is very much related to whether or not magnets are going to foster diverse and equitable school choice. We'll talk in a little bit about the key factors for developing diverse in equitable magnet schools. It's kind of thinking of them in two different steps. Well, how can you design an equitable magnet school? But once children are in those schools, what are you doing to provide equitable learning environments? So magnet schools can have very different designs, they can be

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whole school program, a program within a school, have competitive or non-competitive entrance requirements.

Dr. Diem: But again, just hearkening back to the key is that the way that a magnet program is designed is really going to yield different results when it comes to integration. So in my next slide, I just want to ask you all what you think are some ways that we can sustain and promote diverse and equitable magnet schools in the current school choice context? So what do you all think that ... and perhaps some of you that have magnet schools, what are doing in your district to try to get to this?
(silence)

Dr. Diem: So feel free to make some suggestions in the chat box, or if you want to speak feel free as well.

Chris G: Sarah?

Dr. Diem: Yes?

Chris G: Hi, this is Chris Gross in Napa, California with Napa Valley Unified School District ... Hi, everyone. Yeah, so we feel that one of our strengths is the community partnership with theme alignment. I know that that's said a lot in different conversations, but it is one that will hook not only parent involvement, but just again in general, the community. So that's something we try to do. I think we've done fairly well in a few spots just, again, engaging the community partnerships in the theme.

Dr. Diem: Yeah. Yeah, I have on my next slide some things we'll get to after we talk about this, but yeah, it's having an attractive theme, but knowing what that theme is by engaging with the community families to see what's relevant to them and to their children. So yeah, I appreciate that. Any other thoughts?

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Robin J: I think that ... and this is something that I've learned from being here at the MAP Center, that when we think about promoting diversity and equity and all those things, it's more than superficial, it's more than optics, it takes a holistic approach, and that includes being sure that the folks who are in charge of creating policies or in this case, the types of initiatives towards magnet schools are doing a lot of the internal work first to be sure that there isn't a reification of an equitable situations.

Robin J: Without doing the internal work, we're going to keep doing the same things over and over again. I think that a lot of times we, let's say ... I mean like those of us in education in many aspects forget about that piece. We go into situations with good intentions, something that looks really great on paper, but the implementation of it ends up looking just like it always has, because we have don't done the holistic work it takes to be able to have the critical consciousness lens to be able to recognize when things are beginning to be inequitable once again. So I think that that's an important piece that we always have to remember when we're doing this kind of work.

Dr. Diem: Right, yeah. I agree 100%, that it's not ... You want to bring everyone to the table, but you actually want, like you were saying, optics, not just for optics, but do you actually want to hear and listen to people? And you continuously do that. That's why I appreciated what Chris just said about community engagement around a theme for a magnet school. I think some people said earlier these STEM magnet schools are so ... they're the ones that seem to be attractive, but there are a lot of other themes that might be attractive. I know in our community, we just created a STEAM magnet middle school. So it's just coming online, so we'll see what it's going to look like. But yeah, I completely agree with what Robin just said.

Dr. Diem: Any other thoughts? If not, we can move to the next slide, has pretty much what everyone has been saying in our discussion today. These are just some key

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factors to developing diverse and equitable magnet schools. We've already talked about this idea of attractive themes, so thinking about what's going to draw families to the school. Perhaps it's not just at the elementary level or the middle school level or the high school level, that it's at all three, that there's kind of a sequence the students can go to magnet schools at all levels. We talked about discussing potential theme ideas with the school community to gauge their interest and their ideas for themes.

Dr. Diem: Earlier and throughout this conversation, we've been talking about admissions. I really want to emphasize the point that research has really shown that using competitive criteria can really create barriers in terms of access in equity to magnet schools. So using lotteries, weighted lotteries that have factors such as student demographics or demographics in the neighborhoods could really help increase diversity.

Dr. Diem: We touched a little bit on the third one, outreach in marketing. Again, disseminating information via multiple platforms, multiple languages, being available to provide assistance with the admissions process, because the admissions process can be very challenging. So just being available to help families with that I think is really important as well.

Dr. Diem: Inter-district options, inter-district choice. When I referenced the learning community a little bit ago, when multiple school districts can come together and partner and participate and have students attend inter-district magnet programs across a metropolitan region. This is really big in Connecticut. They have, as the result of a court case of desegregation ... I encourage you all, if you don't know about *Sheff v. O'Neill*, but the whole magnet program in Connecticut is inter-district.

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- Dr. Diem:** Strategic location of magnet schools is another big one. We talked earlier as well about transportation. It needs to be accessible and free, I think, for these magnet schools to be successful in terms of their intended goals of being diverse.
- Dr. Diem:** Then once we've created these schools, when students are in the schools, the classrooms have to be diverse, the staff has to be diverse, the faculty has to be diverse. We've seen all too often when schools are desegregated, but then you walk into individual classrooms and they're very segregated. So what are we doing to ensure the classroom, staff, and faculty are diverse?
- Dr. Diem:** I think this connects to the last two around culturally sustaining pedagogy. Django Paris, he wrote an equity brief for the center a few years ago. He defines culturally sustaining pedagogy as teaching and learning that seeks to perpetuate and foster linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the demographic project of schooling and is a needed response to demographic and social change. He goes on to say that it takes dynamic cultural and linguistic dexterity as a necessary good and sees the outcomes of learning as additive rather than subtractive as a remaining whole rather than framed as broken and critically enriching strengths rather than replacing deficits. So really just more asset approach to learning.
- Dr. Diem:** Then he also talks about ... I really like his work a lot ... curricularizing equity. So by doing this in the classroom, disrupting racism, structural inequality, and again, using asset and strength based approaches to teaching and learning. I would also add to leadership as well. We do this by preparing teachers and leaders to value and see students and communities of Color as whole people. So I think that's really important.
- Dr. Diem:** I'll add just a few that I thought of after we put the slides together, just some other factors. Community and family engagement. We mentioned strong leadership. I

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think political support. As many of you all probably know, school desegregation in a lot of school districts that have been able to have continuous support for it, the school board is on board with it, superintendent is on board with it, representatives in your state legislature are on board with it, so that political support and will is really crucial. Really getting out there and talking about the importance of this and showing what the social and academic benefits are of diverse schooling environments.

Dr. Diem: Then another thing, Omaha in particular, thinking about the media. I know in the learning community, what's happening in Omaha, the media was a really key factor and played an important role. So thinking about who you can write op-eds or do other ways, social media, getting involved to support your magnet school efforts.

Erin S: [crosstalk 00:45:51] ...

Dr. Diem: So on our next slide ... Oh, go ahead, Erin.

Erin S: Oh, thank you. We have a question from the chat box from Johnetta Ricks ... The question is, is there any research supporting abandoning the magnet school concept for an updated different integration tool? Many countries ... I'm sorry, many counties are segregated, so the distance factor between diverse communities becomes a challenge.

Dr. Diem: Yeah. That's a really good question. I am not aware of that, but that's not to say that it's not out there. I've seen research ... and actually going back to magnet schools is a way of revisiting trying to integrate schools. But I think that's a really important point that you raise.

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- Dr. Diem:** Okay, so just a few other things. Some major equity issues in why magnet schools are still relevant, which kind of goes to this question. There's a deepening racial and economic school segregation existent between schools. We still have residentially segregated areas. We've talked about this throughout, the expansion of school choice.
- Dr. Diem:** This last one I think is important to recognize, school district secession is accelerating. This is really contributing to school segregation. This is kind of a tactic that's being used ... that was actually used when school desegregation first came about. But this is just to define it for you, this is when new smaller schools systems are created by breaking off from larger school districts. The argument for this is to have more local control over funding and resources in these newer, smaller districts. Research has shown that these smaller districts are usually wider and more affluent than the districts that they secede from.
- Dr. Diem:** Just some interesting facts about school district secession. Currently there are 30 states that have laws that allow for school district secession to occur. Few of these laws really consider the racial or economic impact of these secessions. Since 2000, so a little less than 20 years, according to a report there had been 128 communities that have attempted to secede from larger school districts while 73 had been successful. These numbers have been particularly increasing in the last few years. So I think this is also something that plays into this whole conversation around desegregation and integration as well.
- Dr. Diem:** So on our last slide, just some final thoughts. What are some remaining questions that you have about magnet schools? What would you like to see addressed in future resources when it comes to magnet schools? I think that one question about ... I want to look up after our conversation today on research supporting abandoning magnet schools for an updated integration tool. That's a really good

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point. Any other things that you all maybe would like to see addressed when it comes to magnet schools?

Chris G: Sarah?

Dr. Diem: Yes?

Chris G: I don't want to step on my colleagues here. You're okay. Chris and Denise in Napa. Maybe just something about some sustainability through the years, optimal, adequate, minimal. At what point is the magnet themed program optimal, minimal, or adequate would be helpful, sustaining that through time as leadership changes. I know that integration of the curriculum is a key component, so when it's actually just embedded into the school itself, it's because it's practice. That would be great.

Dr. Diem: That's great. Yeah, thank you for sharing that. Oh, I like that, Johnetta just added. Thank you for that comment.

Dan: Hi, my name is Dan. I work at Enroll Indy in Indianapolis, so we manage the lottery process for both magnet schools and charter schools in Indianapolis, just with one of the districts in Indianapolis public schools. So one of the challenges I think that the district faces with this is that they have different enrollment policies for these two schools, so they're operating magnet schools within a system of neighborhood boundary schools as well. So part of the challenge is that every neighborhood boundary school has to take students all year round throughout the entire school year as long as they're in that boundary, whereas magnet schools can then restrict based off of their program or whatever, they have a little more autonomy to restrict enrollment at certain times during the year.

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- Dan:** So I think that case is really challenging, dynamic kind of within the district of sort of making the neighborhoods a little less competitive with magnet schools just from an enrollment timing standpoint. You have families that are more mobile that are coming later in the year that are then ending up in boundary schools or they're having more chaos created at the neighborhood schools throughout the school year. I think that's a big challenge we're trying to figure out how we can support from an enrollment policy standpoint to kind of level the playing field between those two dynamics.
- Dr. Diem:** Right. Thank you for that. You all, Indianapolis used to have an inter-district program, right?
- Dan:** They do to some degree.
- Chris G:** Sarah?
- Dan:** Yes.
- Chris G:** Hi. It was so wonderful that you touched upon in the prior conversation about just the policies and procedures in place within a district. If there would be any space for a conversation about just that topic, positioning [crosstalk 00:53:12] ... schools or themed schools within the context of a district and the district's intent is to make sure that the public sees all schools as viable public school choice options. However, the intention of the magnet schools would be to be unique and to be within the public, showing the public that they have a uniqueness. Now my question in summary is perhaps a future conversation about contextualizing the magnet programs within a school district where the intent is also to shine positive light on all schools, however, making sure that those magnet schools are capturing the community's attention as unique options. I find it kind of a juxtapose district

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policies encouraging the development of magnet schools, and then as we move through the future, then a district is perhaps not being brave enough to continue to advocate to show the community that these magnet schools do have some uniqueness to them. That's all.

Dr. Diem: Okay. I'm writing these notes down. I appreciate it, thank you. (silence)

Robin J: Were there any other final thoughts related to these questions or anything else on anyone's mind?

Chris G: Just one other thing from Napa. I have a colleague that always is right on target. She's very much talking about being able to provide education to a community that will embrace magnets or in general the diversity, and that the purpose of family's choosing that magnet would be for the community's good. I know there's research to show that integration and diverse learning environments, there's a lot of research on that. Maybe another conversation focused on engaging a community with an educational kind of intent so that the families are not just choosing schools because of the theme or academic achievement, they're also choosing it because it's good for the community environment. That might be something just ... I know it's been mentioned within the research, but just a real focus on how ... the best practices to do that.

Dr. Diem: All great points, Chris. I appreciate it, thank you. (silence)

Erin S: Okay, if there are no other lingering questions or comments at this moment, we want to take a moment to thank each of you for participating in today's EquiLearn Virtual Roundtable, *Magnet Schools in the 21st Century: Viable Integration Strategies or Sites of Segregation?* We want to also provide a special thanks to Dr. Diem for taking the time to be with us today and share her expertise and

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insight. Before we conclude, we would like to highlight a few of our *Equity by Design* briefs, all ... excuse me, all authored or co-authored by Dr. Diem. The first is entitled *What You Need to Know About School Desegregation and Integration and Why It Still Matters*. This brief provides practitioners ... (silence)

Robin J: Erin, you muted yourself somehow.

Erin S: Oh, no. At what point?

Robin J: You can start at the beginning of the first brief.

Erin S: Okay. So I'm going to be sharing both of these briefs in the chat box. Okay. Before we conclude, we'd like to highlight two *Equity by Design* briefs, both either authored or co-authored by Dr. Diem. The first is entitled *What You Need to Know About School Desegregation and Integration and Why It Still Matters*. This brief provides practitioners and state-level education administrators with information regarding school desegregation and integration, a primary charge of the four equity assistance centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office and Elementary Programs, including the Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center.

Erin S: The second brief is entitled *Understanding the Housing School Relationship: Achieving Integration and Racially Changing Cities and Suburbs*. The purpose of this brief is to provide information to parents, community members, and school district leaders and teachers about the relationship between housing policy and school policy. Specifically, this brief provides a succinct history of U.S. housing policy, discusses some current educational policies that impact housing segregation, and demonstrates how demographic changes occurring in suburban and urban areas impact school diversity.

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Robin J: There is one more brief. Finally, the last brief is entitled *Promoting Racial and Socioeconomic Integration to Public Schools*. The purpose of this brief is to provide an overview of the benefits and potential factors for school districts and stakeholders to consider when developing programs to increase diversity, socioeconomic and racial, in their schools. Next we want to encourage you to visit our website for tools and resources in our Equity Resource Library, such as our bi-monthly *Equity Dispatch* publication, our *Equity Spotlight* podcast series, and our *Equity Tools*. You can access all materials on our website as well as stay abreast of upcoming events via our calendar of events. Let's continue the conversation on Twitter. Directly after this roundtable, we'll be moving the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #MapEquity. Don't miss out on the next 15 minutes. Thank you all for being in our Virtual Roundtable today.

Robin J: Also, Erin posted in the chat. Our post-session questionnaire, we love to hear your feedback. We take into consideration everything you all have to say about all of our virtual experiences. So if you can take a moment to please, please, please do our post-session questionnaire. Thank you very much.

[End of Audio]