

# RESEARCH

***Report on an Educational Program***  
Department of Research and Accountability

**LAMAR MAGNET SCHOOL  
OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
1999–2000**

Houston Independent School District

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### LAMAR MAGNET SCHOOL OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION 1999–2000

#### Program Description

Lamar High School's Magnet Program for Business Administration is a School-Within-A-School (SWAS) established in 1983. This unique program focused on an innovative college preparatory curriculum for students interested in careers in business administration. Furthermore, Lamar's business magnet represented the only program in the Houston Independent School District (HISD). To further enhance the educational experiences for Lamar students, a partnership between The University of Houston, College of Business Administration (CBA), and Lamar's School of Business Administration was forged in 1998. The goal of this partnership was to help guide and foster business students from the beginning of high school through the continuation of their college career. Lamar's campus is centrally located so that the members of the business community could be easily accessed. A second endeavor to integrate the business community into the educational process centered around incorporating curricular elements from Junior Achievement into the Business Management Classes and International Business Classes. Businessmen and women enhanced the classroom experience by incorporating their knowledge and experiences of the business world into the presentations and activities.

On the ninth grade level, students enrolled in Magnet Business Computer Information Systems 1 or Magnet Computer Science 1, and keyboarding. During their sophomore year, Magnet students enrolled in Magnet Business Management and Ownership. Students could select from eight different Business electives during their junior and senior years. These currently included: Magnet Accounting, Magnet Computer Science 1, Magnet Computer Science 2, Macroeconomics/Microeconomics, Magnet Business Law, Magnet Banking and Financial Systems, Magnet International Business, and Magnet Internship.

The Magnet Internship represented a special component of the program. Lamar Magnet students had the opportunity to select from 21 different businesses. Interns spent at least three hours a day, Monday through Friday, at the sponsor's site.

Throughout the year, Magnet students were engaged in business activities ranging from entrepreneurship and advanced technology applications to nonprofit foundation grantmaking. Freshmen attended an excursion to Enron to gain an understanding of the corporate world. Other culminating spring activities included the *Business Career Expo 2000* and the annual *Brown Bag Banquet*.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the Magnet program in relation to its stated goals and its impact on those students enrolled in the program. The present evaluation addressed the following research questions:

1. Which components contributed to the fulfillment of objectives for the Lamar Magnet School of Business Administration?
2. What was the student transfer rate at Lamar High School for the 1999–2000 school year? How did transfer rates compare to the 1998–1999 school year?
3. What was the academic performance of Lamar Magnet School of Business Administration during the 1998–1999 and 1999–2000 school years?
4. What were the students' perceptions of the internship program?
5. What were the teachers', students', and parents' perceptions regarding satisfaction of the Lamar Magnet School of Business Administration program?

6. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Lamar Magnet School of Business Administration program as seen by the students, teachers, and parents?

### Findings

- Lamar High School extended the traditional curriculum by adding the school for Business Administration Magnet Program. Students were exposed to a specially designed “hands-on” business curriculum.
- During the 1999–2000 school year, teachers indicated that speakers from the Speaker’s Bureau were not scheduled because of logistical issues.
- Although half of the teachers schoolwide indicated on a survey that staff development at Lamar High School was beneficial, only 32% of the teachers indicated that they understood the objectives of the Business Magnet program.
- There were a higher proportion of magnet-related transfers into the school than out of the school between 1998 and 2000. During the past two years, the transfers into the program increased by 3 percentage points, and transfers out of the program decreased by 2 percentage points.
- A higher percentage of 10th grade Magnet students passed the reading, math, and writing subtests on the TAAS Exit exam compared to the 10th grade Non-Magnet students and districtwide 10th graders.
- Magnet students exceeded districtwide students on the Algebra EOC exam by at least 15 percentage points. However, the passing rate for students taking the exam in ninth grade was only 70%.
- Although students were required to take advanced or International Baccalaureate classes in the core curriculum, for the past two years, only 87% of the students earned either a Recommended or Distinguished Diploma.
- Mean verbal and math SAT-1 scores for senior Magnet students exceeded that of national test takers by at least 33 points.
- Although 68% (n=96) of the senior Magnet students were enrolled in at least one IB course, only 18% (n=17) were IB diploma candidates for the 1999–2000 school year.
- Twenty-six percent of the seniors (n=37) participated in the internship program. Interns indicated that they had benefited from the program, but recommended diversifying the businesses, employing weekly discussions, and reducing the required paperwork.
- Based upon discussions in the focus groups, the student interns indicated that the businesses involved did not take a mentor role, but assigned them repetitive tasks (i.e. faxing, Xeroxing, and filing), indicating that the businesses did not understand the mentor role that they were to play in the program.
- As a direct result of their internship experience, the majority of students (n=7) in the first focus group indicated that they would not intern for a large corporation if they had to repeat the experience based upon factors such as stress, corporate climate, time commitment, and job assignments (i.e. repetitive tasks).
- The majority of interns would not recommend the internship experience for all Magnet students because of the time commitment and stress. Stress was caused by various factors, including the impact of organizational restructuring, corporate culture, level of responsibility, and job expectations.
- The internship coordinator was responsible for recruiting and selecting students for the program, outlining program expectations, matching students with businesses, establishing new internships with the business community, monitoring and evaluating student performance, and assisting students with workplace issues. Other school related responsibilities included, but were not limited to providing instruction to Lamar students and participating as a UIL coach.
- With 60% of the student population identified as Gifted and Talented, student survey comments such as “[the] most work I received in my Magnet classes was busy work,” and “I would like to see harder classes,” supported the lack of rigor

in the Business Magnet Courses.

- Since 60% of the Business Magnet students were enrolled in IB courses and were working toward advanced seals on their diploma, student comments indicated that they would prefer more academically challenging courses where they would earn 5 points per course rather than taking 4 points for a less challenging curriculum.
- Magnet Students enrolled in the IB program indicated that scheduling represented an area of weakness. Student comments such as “Being able to be actively involved in the internship program and an [International Baccalaureate Degree Candidate] IBDC. I wanted to be in the internship program but I couldn’t. People should tell us before hand about the program and how we can still be an IBDC my sophomore year,” supported the scheduling issues faced by students.
- Only 16% of the teachers agreed that the Magnet classes at Lamar were the right size. School personnel indicated that additional staff were needed, especially in view of the program’s enrollment (n=681) coupled with the added responsibilities of Magnet staff (committee work, coaching, or coordinating Magnet components).

### Recommendations

1. Address the curriculum concerns of the parents, teachers, and students by aligning business courses with those on a University level. Continue developing the International Business component, and consider adding foreign language (IB) as a Magnet component beginning in the freshman year.
2. Maintain current recruitment efforts since they seem adequate towards increasing magnet transfers into the school and decreasing magnet transfers out of the school. Consider focusing on all

recruits who have passed the Algebra EOC exam to track them into the honors computer course.

3. Provide an inservice at the beginning of the year to explain the goals and objectives of the Magnet program with the rest of the Lamar instructional faculty. Reevaluate staff development opportunities for the teachers so that the Magnet population receives the maximum benefits.
4. Emphasize and outline the mentorship relationship for the participating employers. Identify a business mentor for each intern. Diversify the number of businesses, employ weekly group debriefing sessions, and increase the number of job site visits. Dedicate a counselor to work with all interns to assist students with stress or work related issues. Incorporate an additional staff member to assist the coordinator with the new recommendations. Consider offering a summer internship program for IB candidates during their junior year.
5. Consider incorporating the parents’, teachers’, and students’ perceptions relative to the strengths and weaknesses of the program’s components into the design of the program. Increase the teaching staff so that the program can continue to expand and diversify. Provide additional technical (on-site computer technician) and clerical staff. Provide more case studies for curricular elements. For the Magnet program, consider adding Freshman and Sophomore Level IB classes. Address the scheduling concerns of the Magnet students by consulting with the school counselors to derive a course of study starting in the freshman year and continuing through the senior year.
6. Since computer is an integral part of a business program, limit class sizes so that each student can be assigned to a working computer. The classroom delivery will be more effective.