



INTEGRATED VOICES

IN THIS ISSUE:

- *Noted panelists discuss the state of the Sheff settlement and integrated education in Connecticut*
- *Magnet School Spotlight*
- *Latest Connecticut KidsCount Report on Family Economic Success*
- *Local Magnet Schools Selected for National Awards*

Integrated Voices is the quarterly newsletter of the Sheff Movement. To submit information, contact Grace Clark, grace.clark@sheffmovement.org.

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

APRIL 2012

Increase in Number of Children and Families Seeking Magnet Schools and Open Choice Programs

Recent application figures for the 2012-2013 school year show a significant increase in the number of students who want to attend Hartford and suburban magnet schools, and the Hartford region Open Choice school program for suburban students attending Hartford Public Schools.

“I’m proud to report that we have received 15,791 applications from youngsters who are desirous of a less segregated setting in our region, and that represents a 14-percent increase from the previous year,” said George Coleman, former state Deputy Education Commissioner, at an event on school integration on March 20th. “Of those students, 5,715 were from Hartford and that represents a 19-percent increase from the past year. And of that amount again, 10,076 were from suburban communities representing a 22-percent increase from the past year.”

The Regional School Choice Office (RSCO) in Hartford has conducted the 2012-2013 lottery for magnet schools and will send parents either a Placement Response letter or a Waitlist Request letter. The lottery for the Open Choice program for Hartford applicants attending suburban schools is being held this month.

State of School Integration



National and local educators, and attorneys discuss the state of integrated education in Connecticut, 16 years after the landmark Sheff v. O’Neill case’s Supreme Court decision - and what needs to happen next, at a recent symposium at UConn Law School in Hartford.

New research on benefits of diversity in early education



The Century Foundation (www.tcf.org), which looks at ways to integrate public schools by economic status through public school choice, has released a new empirical study showing improved language and math skills development for children in socio-economically diverse pre-k programs.

The study, based on data from 11 states, finds that “direct peer interactions” play a significant role in the positive outcomes measured.

Click here to read - <http://www.sheffmovement.org/pdf/DiverseEarlyEducation.pdf>

“We still have a few more years to go to reach the goal of integration. Whereas desegregation was the goal in the 20th century, the goal in the 21st century is closing the Achievement Gap.”

-Attorney John C. Brittain, Professor of Law, University of the District of Columbia



State of Integrated Education in the Hartford Region

HARTFORD (March 20, 2012) - A panel of prominent national and local attorneys and educators discussed how to move forward efforts to further achieve quality integrated education in Connecticut schools, at a symposium, “Inter-district Public Education: Equalizing Opportunity Beyond Racial Integration,” held at the University of Connecticut School of Law in Hartford.

The focus of the event was the landmark *Sheff v. O’Neill* School Desegregation Case that resulted in a 1996 court mandate that students in Hartford and the surrounding region be given opportunities for integrated education settings; the current *Sheff* settlement and future of inter-district public education.

“It’s exciting how vibrant, educational opportunities are now taking place in the magnet

schools,” said Martha Stone, Executive Director, Center for Children’s Advocacy and Adjunct Professor of Law. “If we’re really true to what the goals are in decreasing poverty concentration and integrating schools, then regionalization has to be a topic at the top of the list.”

Attorney John C. Brittain, Professor of Law, University of the District of Columbia, and one of the lead lawyers in the original *Sheff* case, said overall, there is much more work to be done to accomplish school integration goals.

There has been an increase in applications for magnet schools and the regional Open Choice program, said George A. Coleman, former Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut Department of Education.

Other panelists added

that there still needs to be more open seats in suburban districts. They also said the Achievement Gap, early childhood education and the charter school movement should not be discussed independent of the *Sheff* movement, but rather be included as part of the court remedies.

Other panelists were: David A. Clarke of the School of Law and Patrice McCarthy, Deputy Director and General Counsel, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education. Moderator was Thomas B. Mooney, Partner, Shipman & Goodwin, LLP and Adjunct Professor of Law, University of Connecticut School of Law.

MAGNET SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT



Environmental Sciences Magnet School at Mary Hooker (Hartford)

Two years ago, Mary Hooker School transitioned from a Hartford neighborhood school to a unique magnet school, now rooted in environmental science. The school boasts a 20-acre nature trail on its campus, a greenhouse, butterfly vivarium and aquatics center. In addition to providing enrichment, acceleration and intervention supports, the school offers two resident scientists on staff and a host of inquiry and project-based learning projects. Built to enroll 600 students, Mary Hooker had 270 students last year and now has 360 students. Enrollment is expected to grow based on current applications. “We’re really excited about meeting the Sheff stipulation and [integration] goals,” said Peter Dart, principal. “We provide opportunities to recognize that one size doesn’t fit all.”

Principal’s Office

How does an integrated setting help students learn at Mary Hooker?

“It erases zip codes; it erases boundaries and towns; and it unifies kids with their natural born curiosity with these slimy creatures that’s just in their back yard. Whether it’s a condominium apartment or the sprawling nice house in Glastonbury, doesn’t matter. “

- Peter Dart, principal, Environmental Sciences at Mary Hooker

7 MAGNET SCHOOLS TO RECEIVE NATIONAL AWARDS

Seven Hartford Public Schools have been selected by Magnet Schools of America to receive Magnet Schools of Merit Awards, recognizing them as among the best schools of their kind in the United States.

Three Hartford schools –

Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy, Noah MicroSociety Magnet School and University High School for Science & Engineering – were named Magnet Schools of Excellence, the top category given to select schools across

the country.

Four other schools – Breakthrough Magnet, the Environmental Sciences Magnet School at Mary Hooker, R. J. Kinsella Magnet School of Performing Arts and the Sport and Medical Sci

ences Academy—were named to the second category of Magnet Schools of Distinction.

These schools will compete for a top Distinguished Merit Award given to one school. All of the awards will be presented on Sunday, May 20, 2012, at the 30th Annual National Conference on Magnet Schools to be held in Dallas, Texas.

Policy Update

The Connecticut Association for Human Services (CAHS) has released the latest Connecticut KidsCount report, which examines the impact of race/ethnicity, poverty and geography on family economic success in Connecticut. State indicators show stark differences in state household wealth, net worth, employment, educational attain-

ment, and poverty, dispelling the impression that we are a "post-racial" society. The report also highlights historical and policy causes to current inequities and recommends policy solutions – including a recommendation to the state to “prioritize racial and economic integration for all school construction and operations, such as new school construction, charters, magnets, and inter-district programs.” **Click here to**

read - <http://www.cahs.org/pdf/OpportunityInCT.pdf>





VISIT US: www.sheffmovement.org

- Latest news on school integration
- Magnet school feature stories
- New studies and reports
- Legislative Updates

UPCOMING EVENTS

National Conference on School Diversity
Georgetown University Law Center
Washington, DC
Thursday, May 17, 2012

The Sheff Movement is sponsoring some parents for the conference. If you would like to attend, contact grace.clark@sheffmovement.org

Sheff Meeting Highlight

STATE EDUCATION COMMISSIONER STEFAN PRYOR MET WITH THE SHEFF MOVEMENT COALITION IN FEBRUARY 2012 TO DISCUSS SCHOOL INTEGRATION AND STATE EDUCATION PRIORITIES.



State Education Commissioner Stefan Pryor talked with us about Sheff v. O'Neill and school integration. (L- Elizabeth Horton Sheff, lead plaintiff, Sheff v. O'Neill).

About 80 educators, parents and others gathered to share ideas about more integrated education and the Governor's education proposals.

This month in Sheff Movement history

In April 1989, lawyers from the CT ACLU, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund filed the case of Sheff v. O'Neill in Hartford Superior Court, on behalf of 17 African American, Latino, and White children (two from West Hartford), challenging conditions of racial segregation, poverty concentration, and gross inequities in resources and academic outcomes between Hartford and its surrounding suburbs. Defendants included the Governor, state Treasurer, and Commissioner of Education.

JOIN US

Sheff Movement Meetings

3rd Saturday of every month:

9:30am-11am

Capital Preparatory

Magnet School

1304 Main Street, Hartford, CT

Or

To sign up for our email list &

newsletter, email

grace.clark@sheffmovement.org

The Sheff Movement is a coalition of educators, parents and other partners working to support and expand inter-district, integrated schools and education programs to meet the goals of the landmark Sheff v. O'Neill school desegregation case in Connecticut. We engage in public education, organizing and advocacy.