

BERKELEY ARTS MAGNET SCHOOL

STATEMENT TO THE SUPERINTENDENT'S TASK FORCE ON SCHOOL ORGANIZATION JANUARY 26, 1993

At Berkeley Arts Magnet we have a strong sense of community which has been created by our history, our arts focus, our parent participation and the fact that we are a school of choice. Our program has been developed over time and with care.

The arts are an integral part of the total academic program, wherein all subjects, arts as well as traditional academics, are treated with equal seriousness. In K-3, the children experience a variety of art forms. Then in grades 4-6, children choose which form they want to pursue in-depth.

Therefore, we want to maintain K-6, as 6th grade is an integral part of our arts education program and of our school community. We have no second choice when it comes to grade configuration.

At Arts Magnet, we very closely monitor the racial and sexual balance in our classrooms. We do everything possible to ensure our diversity and feel that we are successful.

For the last two years, a committee of staff and parents met on an ongoing basis with the architect to design the building to suit the particular needs of the Arts Magnet program. Plans have been finalized for the renovation of our current school site to accommodate two classes per grade (K through 6). We have planned for our special needs, including a multipurpose room with a state, an art room, a Comp Ed room, a shared room for pullout programs, a computer lab and a library.

In the future, under whatever reorganization plan is decided upon, the district needs to work with the Arts Magnet community to publicize our successful program as an integral part of the Berkeley Unified School District. There also needs to be school buses available to transport children from throughout the city to schools of choice such as Arts Magnet.

Whatever reorganization is implemented, we feel very strongly that the District must maintain racial integration for all schools.

OTHER ISSUES

We also think there needs to be diversity in grade configuration plans to provide alternatives for middle school grades.

We would like to caution the School Board and School District against artificially imposing, as some kind of solution to issues in the district, the formation of magnet schools at other sites in Berkeley. Our experience has taught us that Magnet Schools work best when it is a natural outgrowth of interest on the part of parents and staff, with sufficient time and resources for planning and implementation.