

## Summary: The Commissioner's Report on Racial Balance in Englewood

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### Background

On January 14, 2005, the Commissioner of Education issued a report on the progress being made towards achieving racial integration of the student body at Dwight Morrow High School (DMHS) in Englewood. The semi-annual reports are required by a 2003 court order from the State Board – the latest decision in a 20-year old desegregation lawsuit.

An earlier court order (2000) required Englewood and the DOE to develop a voluntary plan to integrate DMHS. In response to this order, the district administration, with backing from the Department of Education, designed a magnet school called the “[Academies@Englewood](#).” Each year, the Academies were expected to admit 75 students from Englewood and Englewood Cliffs, and 75 students from outside the district through the Interdistrict Public School Choice Program. Since 2002, a Ninth Grade class has been added each year so that, this year, there are Academies students in grades 9, 10 and 11.

The Academies are comprised of four public high school programs of choice within DMHS (in finance, information systems, law and public safety, and pre-engineering). Students from the Academies follow a separate academic program from DMHS, use separate facilities, and operate on separate class and elective schedules.

The State Board recognized that this magnet school approach to racial integration might not solve the problem of segregation at DMHS. The State Board also asserted that it has “both the responsibility and the authority” to “ensure that the situation is in fact corrected.” For this reason, the Board retains control of the case and monitors progress toward achieving racial balance at DMHS through the Commissioner's periodic reports.

**Enrollment Data.** The Commissioner's Report contains the following data on enrollment:

(1) The total enrollment for DMHS and the Academies (9-11<sup>th</sup> grade) is approximately 1209 students. Of these, about 41% are Black; 44% are Hispanic; 6% are White; 8% are Asian; 0.4% are Other.

(2) The enrollment for DMHS, not including the Academies, is approximately 898 students. Of these, about 46% are Black; 51% are Hispanic; 1% is White; and 2% are Asian.

(3) The enrollment for the Academies is 311 total students.

- Of the total enrollment of 311, about 25% are Black; 25% are Hispanic; 21% are White; 28% are Asian; 2% are Other.
- Of the total enrollment of 311, 126 students are from Englewood (41%), and 185 are out-of-district pupils from Englewood Cliffs (6 students) and Interdistrict Choice (179 students) (59% of the total).
- Englewood students make up about 49% of the 11<sup>th</sup> grade class; 38% of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade class; and 36% of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade class.
- Of the 126 Englewood students enrolled in grades 9-11, about 51% are Black; 38% are Hispanic; 3% are White; 7% are Asian; 2% are Other.
- Of the 185 out-of-district Cliffs and Choice students enrolled in grades 9-11, about 7% are Black; 17% are Hispanic; 33% are White; 42% are Asian; 2% are Other.

**Key Findings.** The Commissioner’s Report makes the following findings:

- (1) The DMHS student body remains highly segregated (when the Academies students are not included). DMHS is 97% Black and Hispanic but less than 1% White, even though Englewood’s population is almost equally divided among Whites, Blacks, and Latinos. (Pg. 3; data Charts)
- (2) “Progress toward integrating either the [Academies@Englewood](#) and DMHS programs or. . .student bodies continues to move slowly.” As such, the Academies have not worked as a tool to desegregate DMHS. (Pg. 3).
- (3) In fact, the Academies have created a new “pattern of segregation within Dwight Morrow which may lead to even more serious problems than those that existed before the implementation of the Academies program.” (Pg. 7)
- (4) “Integration must go beyond allowing DMHS students to participate in activities such as clubs, trips, assemblies and pep rallies with Academies students. This approach in and of itself identifies the Academies students as 'haves' and the Dwight Morrow students as 'have-nots.' This perception is legitimate.” (Pg. 6).
- (5) Within the Academies@Englewood, “the admission of students from outside the district through the school choice program has resulted in a well-integrated student body.” However, the numbers of Black and Hispanic students currently enrolled continue to decline. Some of these students are “academically exited;” others choose to exit or not to enroll. (Pg. 3; 2; 4; data charts).
- (6) Regarding the Academies, “the department remains concerned that so few students from Englewood’s middle school appear to qualify for admission” to the program in the first place. (Pg. 3).
- (7) “The current district administration continues to articulate a goal to integrate the Academies and DMHS eventually so that all Englewood resident students will participate in the Academies program.” The report does not explain how and when the district will accommodate all 904 DMHS students. (Pg. 5; data charts).

## **Conclusion**

There has been no significant progress in integrating the student body at DMHS, which remains overwhelmingly Black and Hispanic. In fact, the situation has been made worse, in certain respects, by the school-within-a-school that was designed to address the decades-old problem of racial segregation in the high school and the district. Instead of improving the racial balance at DMHS, the [Academies@Englewood](#) have created a new pattern of segregation by race within the high school.