



# RESEARCH BRIEF

## Research Services

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### Describing Magnet School Students Applicants 2014-15 – Students 2015-16

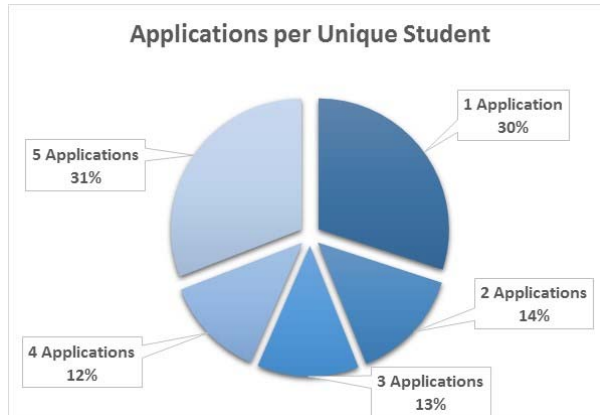
The Miami-Dade County Public School District is a nationally recognized leader in the quality and diversity of educational opportunities. Magnet Programs, in particular, offer distinctive educational choices to students. Magnet programs attract students by offering unique opportunities for in-depth experiences and study in specific areas of interest. Each magnet program emphasizes a specialized theme. The objectives are to create educational interests, honor cultural and ethnic diversity and promote student achievement.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief snapshot of the student body applying to and attending magnet programs in Miami-Dade County schools. Comparisons will be made between accepted and not-accepted applicants and between magnet and non-magnet attendants. Demographic variables considered include the race/ethnicity and the gender of students, as well as their participation in the free/reduced price lunch (FRL) program. Additionally, comparisons in academic performance will be considered. It is hoped that studies such as this can help guide future decision-making processes and program offerings.

### The Applicant Pool

There were 21,841 students applying during the 2014-15 school year for openings in magnet programs in the 2015-16 school year. Many of these students applied for more than one program. The resulting total number of program applications was 65,648. Over the years the magnet programs have become more popular and the number of applicants now far exceed the number of available openings. Among the roughly 22,000 unique student applicants, 12,136 ended up attending magnet programs for which they applied (not including students attending a magnet program other than those for which they applied in 2014-15).

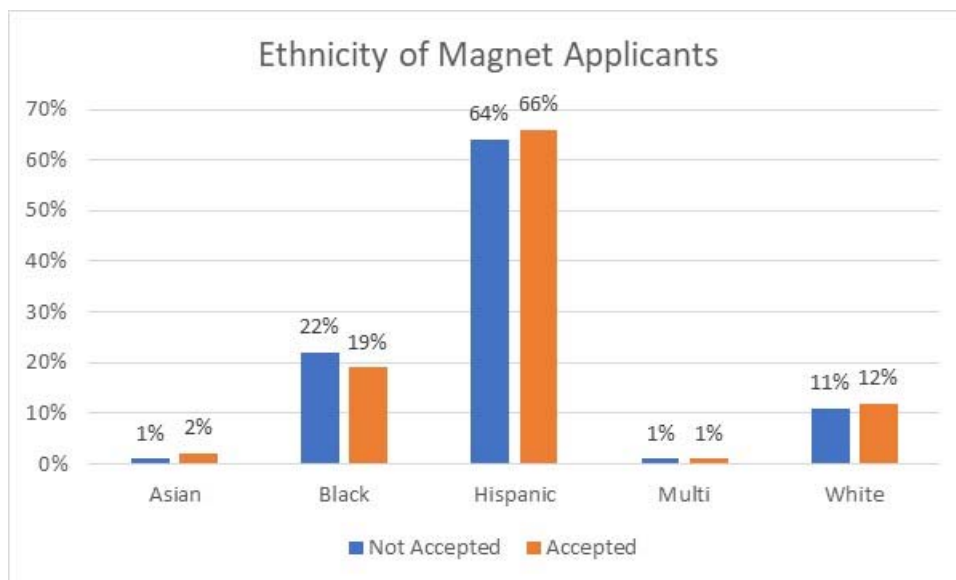
The number of applications per student ranged from 1 (about 30%) to 5 (about 31%). There were slightly over 100 separate locations with magnet program applications. The number of applications per location ranged from about 50 to over 5,000.

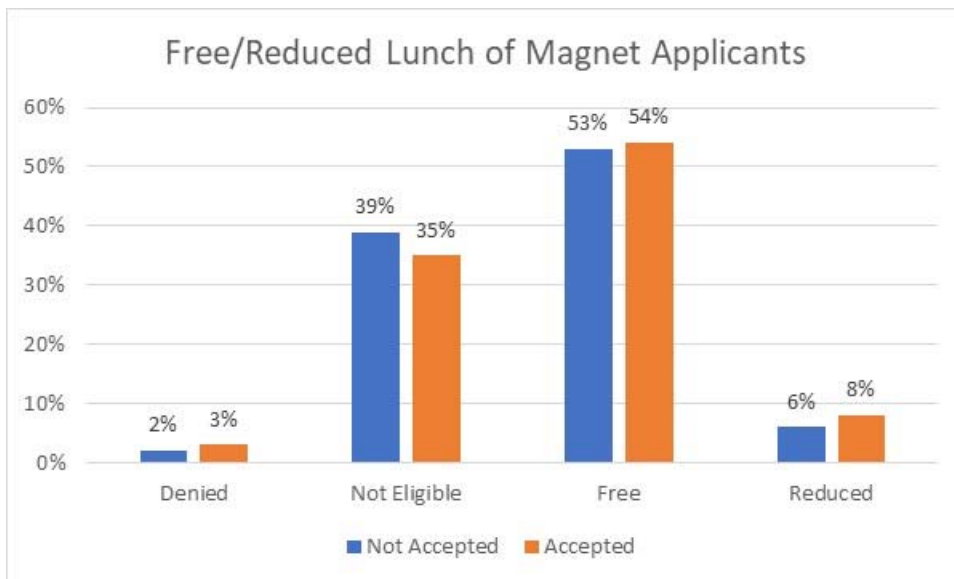
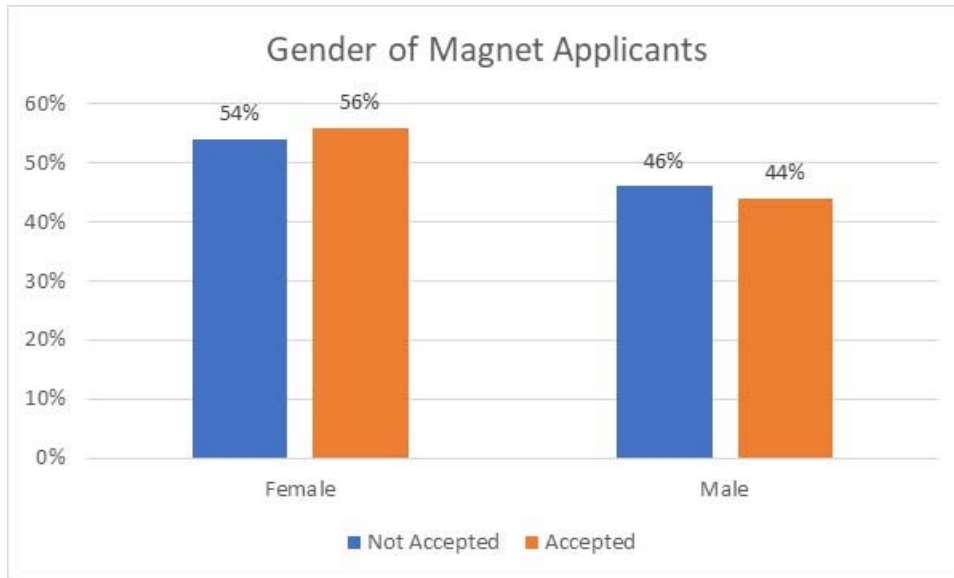


## Comparing Accepted/Not-Accepted Applicants

For the purposes of this study, students were labeled as “Accepted Applicants” if they were attending the magnet program for which they applied in the 2015-16 school year. It should be noted that some students labeled as “Not-Accepted” may have been attending magnet programs, but not the specific ones for which they applied in 2014-15.

Slightly more than half of the applicants were accepted into the programs for which they applied. The graphs below compare those who were Accepted to those who were Not-Accepted on the basis of Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Free/Reduced Lunch status.

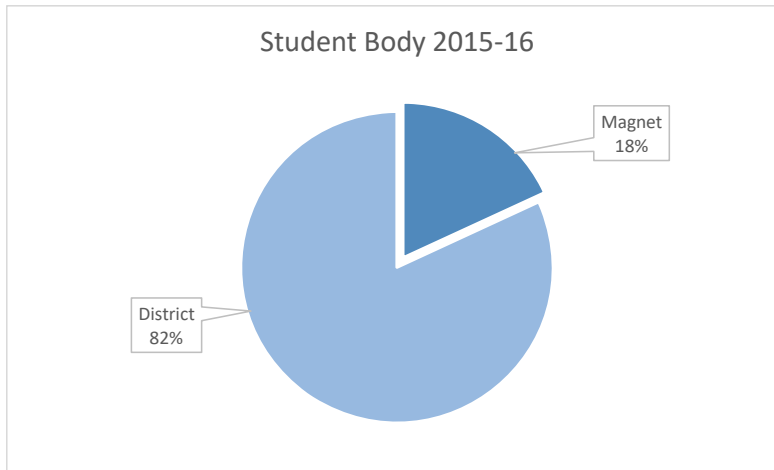




As can be seen from the graphs, the Accepted and the Not-Accepted students were remarkably similar on these demographic dimensions. Although these factors do not cover all possible sources of potential bias, the apparent conclusion is that the process of acceptance shows no partiality along these demographic elements.

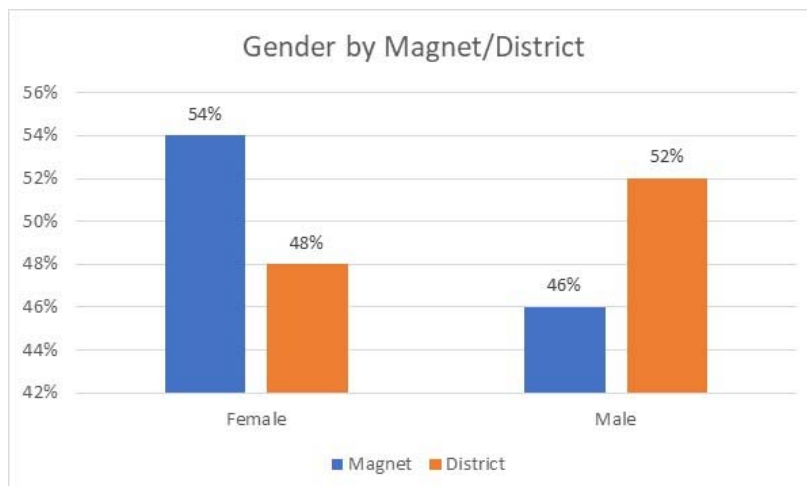
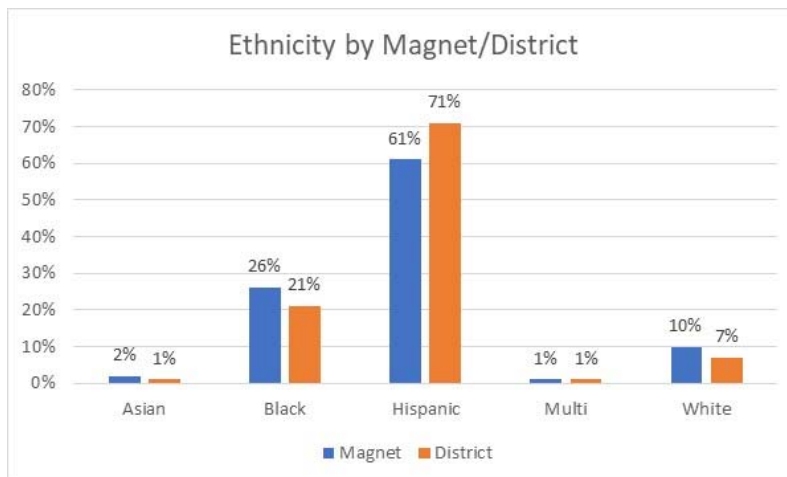
## The Student Body

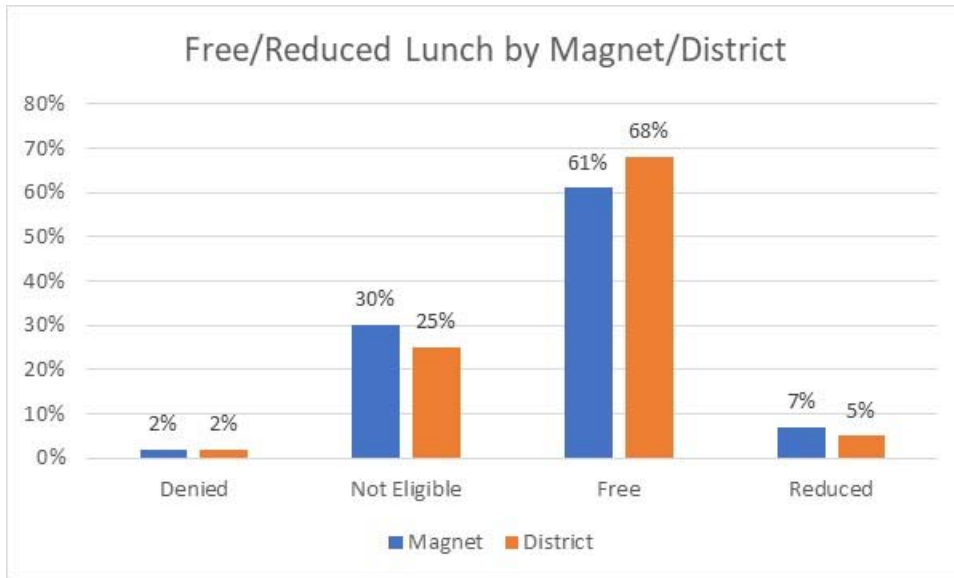
The focus on the previous page was on comparing Accepted and Not-Accepted applicants in 2014-15. Now the attention turns to comparing Magnet and District (non-magnet) students in 2015-16. Of the 357,251 students defining the student body for this study, 64,505 (18 %) were attending magnet programs.



## Comparing Magnet to District Students

The graphs below compare students that were attending Magnet programs to those who were attending District (non-magnet) programs on the basis of Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Free/Reduced Lunch status.

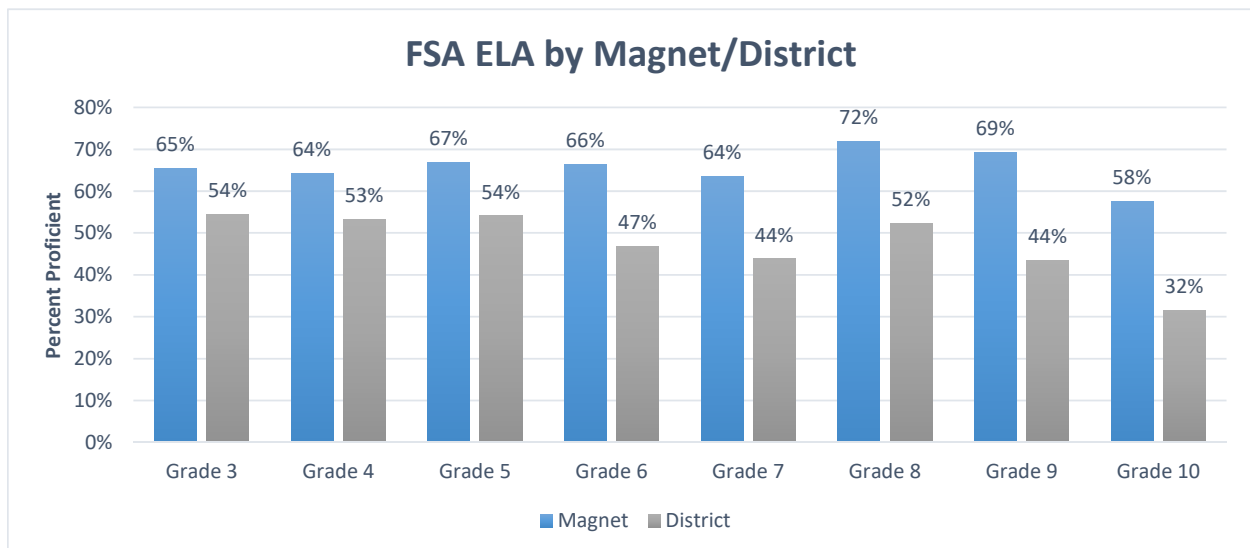


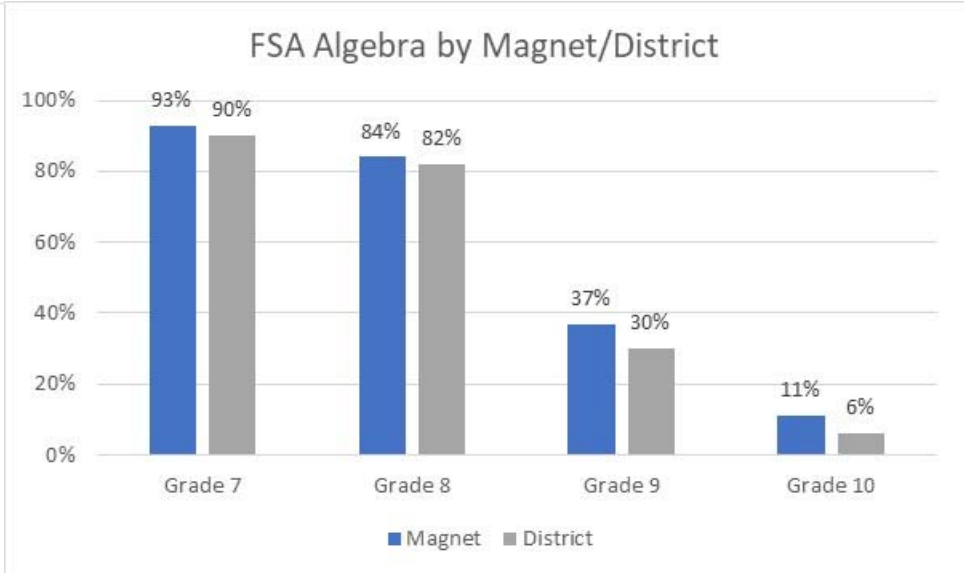
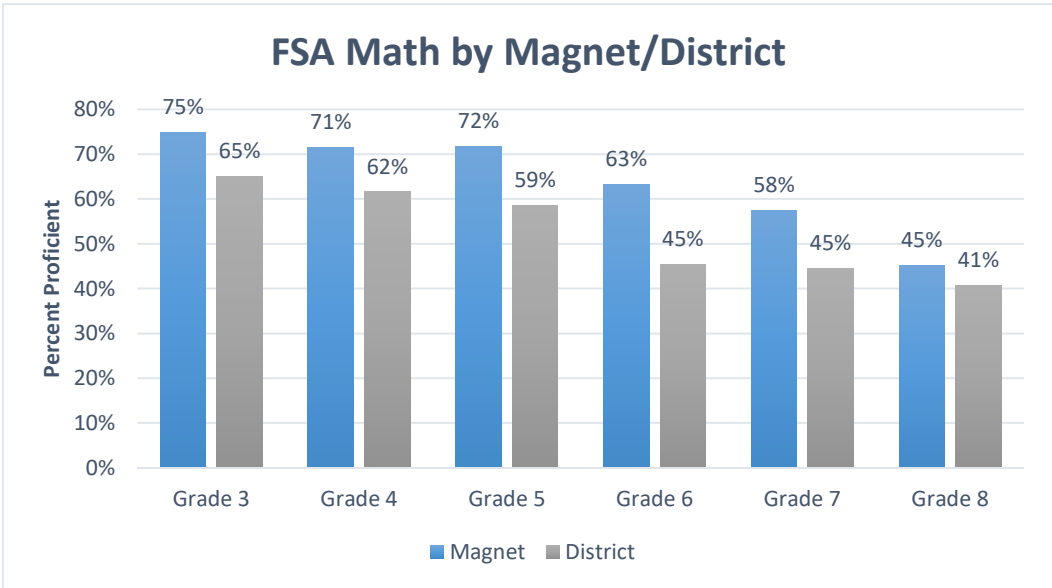
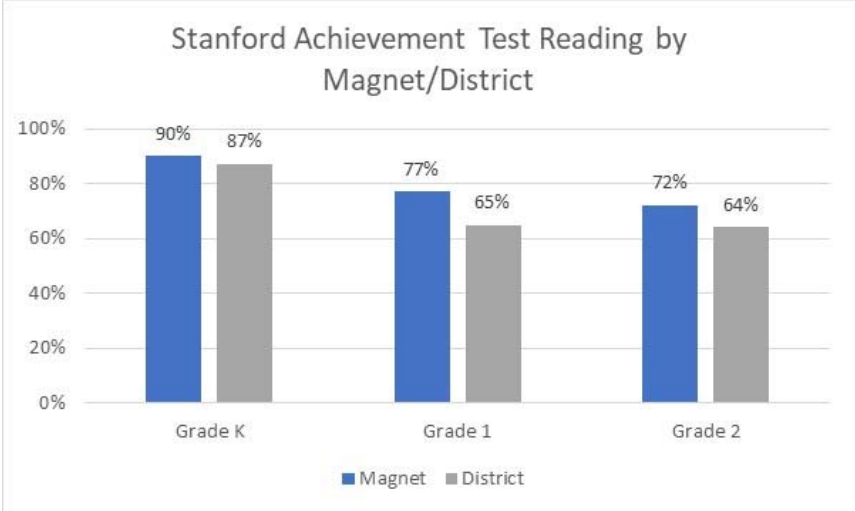


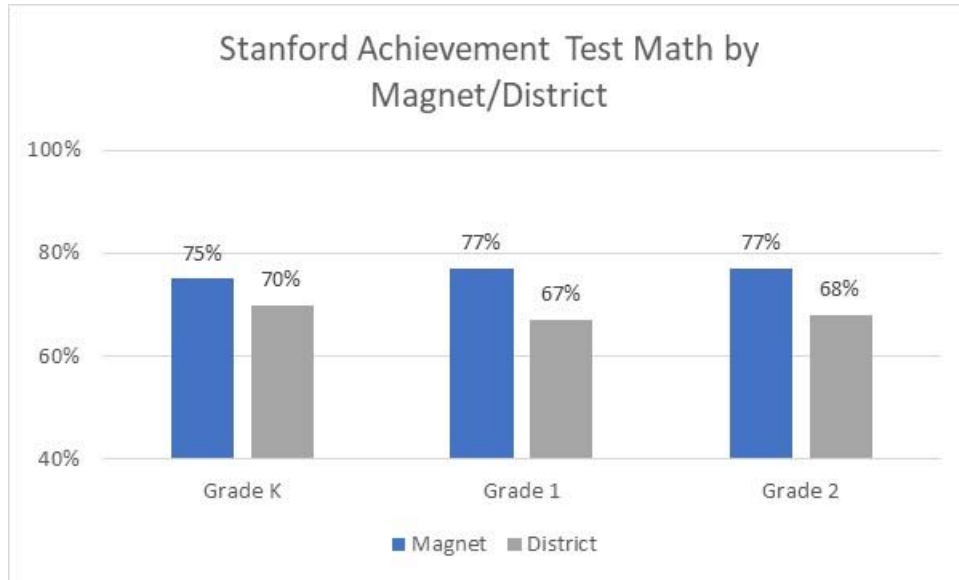
As can be seen from the graphs, the Magnet and the District students were, again, quite similar on these demographic dimensions. Although these factors do not cover all possible sources of potential bias, the ostensible conclusion is that the participation in magnet programs shows no partiality along these demographic elements.

## Student Achievement

Beyond demographic considerations, it is instructive to look at academic performance differences. These comparisons are confined to statewide achievement test scores, including Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Algebra I. These tests cover grades 3 through 10. Included also are comparisons on the Stanford Achievement Test Reading and Mathematics tests for Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. The graphs present the percent of students scoring at or above proficiency level, defined as Level 3 or higher for the FSA tests and the 50<sup>th</sup> National Percentile for the Stanford tests.







In all comparisons made here the Magnet students' academic performance exceed that of District students to a considerable degree.

## Summary

Magnet programs comprise a significant proportion of educational offerings in the district. The overall popularity of the magnet programs is evidenced by the high number of applications each year. For the years under consideration in this study, slightly more than half of the students applying ended up in magnet programs. Although this study is far from a definitive exploration of potential bias, the demographic comparisons between accepted/not-accepted and magnet/district student groups are strong evidence of impartiality. Moreover, in all the academic comparisons studied here, the magnet students substantially outperformed students in non-magnet programs.