

Integration Improvement

A proposal submitted by
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Guiding principles

- Do No Harm
- Achievement
- Accountability
- Honesty
- Freedom
- Alignment
- Inter-District Equity

Do No Harm

- Do No Harm

Non-Disparagement. Part of doing no harm is that no race, culture or nationality (including the U.S.) should be disparaged using integration dollars. It is true that there are objective statistics and historic injustices that can and should be addressed in the proper social studies course or other academic environment. But there are specific curricula guidelines and other dollars that can be used for such education. Programs funded with integration revenue should not be about tearing anyone down or making anyone feel guilty.

Integration Within Schools. It is natural and predictable that people will gravitate toward other people who are similar. Integration dollars should not encourage this by funding courses, academic majors, co-curricular or extra-curricular activities that are aimed at a single race or ethnicity. Once a student arrives at a school, integration should not actually *lessen* the chance that they will have meaningful interaction with a different race or ethnicity. The U.S. Supreme Court may allow public schools to offer classes and clubs targeted at a specific race or ethnicity in order to discourage drop outs or make a school welcoming. But as a spending choice, Minnesota should not use its limited integration dollars for such purposes.

No Stereotyping. Differences are important among races, but also within races. Cultural guides and liaisons should be dynamic and drawn from a wide pool. They should increase the involvement of parents rather than replacing it with an influential elder in a community. The focus should be on bringing everyone the benefits of education and not devolve into sets of demands or stereotypes like “my people don’t need physical education.” The use of integration revenue should require that cultural guides and liaisons and the schools operate on a two-way street in that middle ground between complete assimilation and complete Balkanization, with educational opportunity as the common denominator.

Encouraging Progress. If funding is calculated based on continued achievement gaps, continued racial isolation, or continued concentration of racial groups, we are encouraging the wrong thing. Continued funding should be based on alleviating these problems.

Unintended Consequences and Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations. All students are held to the same standard of behavior and achievement. No quotas in discipline, special education, etc.

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Achievement

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Measurable Academic Achievement. Integration funding is not just about having the right mix in the right schools, but the purpose for which they are going to school in the first place – academics. If there is a strong conviction that racial balancing of schools leads to increased academic performance, then there should be no objection to measuring progress in this area as a condition of continued funding. If reading and mathematics are insufficient measures, then there can be other subjects included. Parental satisfaction surveys are not sufficient because, with open enrollment, we are already measuring parental satisfaction.

Progress for All Groups. It is possible for a school to improve achievement for all groups, but for a gap to continue to exist. Improvement for all groups should be part of the measurement.

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Accountability

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Use Money as Intended. After having defined what are permissible uses of integration revenue, we need to ensure that the money is spent as intended. Districts should also be held accountable for intra-district equity, that integration revenue is used consistent with the needs for school sites within a district.

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Honesty

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No Supplanting Other Obligations. Closely aligned with accountability, we have to be honest about whether integration revenue is being used to supplant the funding ordinarily used for other obligations, thus making integration revenue just another source for general funds. This is particularly important, given that integration levies are not subject to voter approval.

Closing the Washington Monument. There is an old trick in Washington DC that says if the National Park Service anticipates a budget cut, it will say that the cuts will necessitate closing the Washington Monument. In the case of integration revenue, districts are saying that any changes will result in the closing of some program or school, even if they intended to close the program anyway. There needs to be greater honesty about what is going to be cut or closed by the districts.

Other Reasons for Disparate Funding. It has been said that there are larger issues beyond integration revenue that explain why Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Duluth receive higher levels of integration funding. If so, we should be honest about those reasons and call it something else. Also, if there is some gradual decrease or “hold harmless” period, we should be honest during and after this weaning process and not allow it to be said that there was a “cut” two years in a row, so now it is time for an increase. If the decision is to create a new baseline for funding and, as a courtesy, there is gradual implementation, it needs to be labeled as the courtesy that it is.

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Freedom

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Carrot Rather Than Stick. If integration revenue is used to physically move students around and between districts, involuntary movement should be disfavored.

Student and Parent Freedom. In addition to non-disparagement restrictions, any program that wrestles with these difficult issues of race and ethnicity should be done with full parental knowledge and consent.

Teacher Freedom. As with the students, any staff development that goes beyond bright line anti-discrimination laws should comply with non-disparagement restrictions and should have clear opt out provisions for teachers.

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Alignment

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Programs Outside of Racial Integration. There are many programs we have discussed, such as girls in science. These programs may be valuable and may fit under a general definition of “diversity,” but are not racial integration.

Preparing for Global World. Integration revenue is currently being allocated to different districts at different per pupil rates, based largely on geography. The rates are calculated on such things as “racially isolated” and “adjoining” districts. If the funding is used to prepare our student to compete in a global marketplace or to generally appreciate differences between people, there is no student in the state who would not benefit from this. The permissible uses of the money should align with how the money is allocated.

- Inter-District Equity

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Based on the permissible uses of integration revenue, similarly situated districts getting similar results should not receive wildly disparate funding.

Based on the do-no-harm philosophy, it is reasonable to ask whether schools that are not subject to the integration rule should receive integration revenue.

It is also reasonable to ask whether other non-district schools, such as the Perpich Arts High School, should be eligible for integration revenue, consistent with the permissible uses of the funds.