

# When diversity is elusive

## Browns Mill opts for 'choice' academics over desegregation

By KRISTINA TORRES  
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It was no accident in 1991 that Hazel A. Lucas taught black and white students at the high-achieving magnet program at Browns Mill Elementary.

That year DeKalb County officials were still under court supervision to desegregate schools. They decided to expand to the south a popular program begun at the venerable Kittredge Magnet School for High Achievers — opened four years earlier on its own campus in historically white north DeKalb.

Both programs drew students county-wide. Black students admitted to Kittredge took a bus north, while white students admitted to Browns Mill bused south to predominantly black Lithonia.

Then, in 1996, the Supreme Court lifted the desegregation mandate. Court-ordered integration efforts stopped. The school system turned to race-blind admissions.

And white students in the Browns Mill magnet program all but disappeared. Does it matter?

On the cusp of getting its own campus 16 years after opening, the Browns Mill magnet program may finally achieve equality with Kittredge in a success supporters say they will count in bricks and mortar, not skin color.

That success comes as the system embarks on a countywide effort to increase "choice" programs solely for academic reasons, not to achieve desegregation — which was so key in the creation of Kittredge and Browns Mill.

Some here shrug off any potential re-segregation for what they say truly means something: an equal share of resources at the two schools.

About "eight out of every 10 children in DeKalb County is African American; one out of every 10 children is white," said Ernest Brown, whose two youngest children,

▶ Please see **SCHOOLS, B5**



Browns Mill teacher **Audrey Williams** helps **Quincy Grant** and **Chad Smith** prepare for a PowerPoint presentation of the 13 colonies.

# MAGNET PROGRAM TO GET OWN CAMPUS



Photos by RENÉE HANNANSHENRY / Staff  
Agerette Armstead teaches Spanish in Brown's Mill's magnet program. The DeKalb County School System is working to elevate the program to the level of its big sister, Kirtledge Magnet School. Sixteen years after opening, Brown's Mill is about to get its own campus.

# Lottery fills most seats in magnet programs

► Continued from F1

John Lake breathed a huge sigh of relief Wednesday when the card reading "John Lake Jr." was selected from the golden barrel in the board room at DeKalb school headquarters in Decatur.

There were 78 students vying for only 10 vacancies in Kittredge's sixth-grade class. John Jr. has spent the first three months of this school year at Miller Grove Middle.

"I got several letters saying test scores weren't back and I was getting a little upset, but I decided to wait it out and be patient," Lake said. "We're moving him as soon as it's available. I've been praying on it."

As the beginning of the school year approached, the district had little choice but to go ahead with a lottery in July even though test scores weren't available for 490 of the 1,636 students who applied, said magnet coordinator Pat Copeland.

The first time around, 600 students were eligible for six different programs, and 322 seats were filled.

DeKalb officials held some seats open pending results of Georgia's curriculum tests.

The last set of results didn't come in until a few weeks ago.

Copeland said she received calls from a lot of parents — some of them understandably frustrated.

"They didn't want me to forget," Copeland said. "I could never set another date for the [second] lottery, which didn't help."

Of the 490 applicants in limbo since July, 300 were ultimately deemed ineligible. There were 190 new names in Tuesday's drawings, along with 375 remaining applicants not selected in July's first lottery.

There will be a time limit set for registration so students who don't claim their spots will be replaced with those on the waiting list.

Mac Platt, a former Kittredge PTA president, was relieved Wednesday to find out he'd be a Kittredge parent again.

"My child got in. It's very bittersweet because there are a lot of kids who didn't get in," he said.

"I think assimilation [in the middle of the school year] is going to be the biggest thing now."

Crawford Lewis, who oversees student assignments for the district, said schools are planning a variety of strategies, including special tutoring and orientation sessions, to ensure a smooth transition for the newly accepted students.

# Schools: Programs differ in size, staff

► Continued from B1

as twins, attend fifth grade in the Browns Mill magnet program.

"There aren't enough white children in DeKalb for a black child to always sit next to," Brown said. "You can get a quality education in an all-black environment."

Lucas, now Browns Mill's schoolwide assistant principal of instruction, said the school "would love to have" whites and others for diversity's sake. But, for now, it doesn't. Parents say that's fine.

"It comes down to convenience," said Tony Dean, Browns Mill's PTA president, who has a fourth-grade son in the magnet program and a second-grade daughter attending regular classes.

"I live five minutes from Browns Mill," Dean said. "I live five minutes from church. I work at home. One of my biggest concerns is quality of life. Quality of life is not getting on the bus or going to Kittredge."

Whatever building the Browns Mill magnet program moves to would already be owned by the system but unused. System officials said a decision would be announced in the next week or so. Nonetheless, the magnet program's parents and teachers believe the move would finally make it equal to Kittredge both in program size and visibility.

The Browns Mill magnet currently serves 190 students, compared to Kittredge's 415, and does not have its own principal or administrative staff.

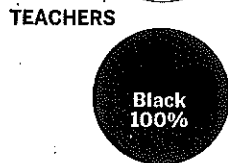
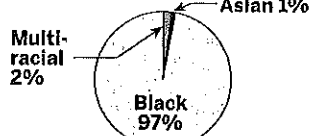


RENEE HANNANS HENRY / Staff

**Taylor Roberts, (left), Chanese Nichols and Jordyn White, all fourth-grade magnet students at Brown's Mill in Lithonia, head to class. Blacks and whites attend Kittredge Magnet School in near-equal numbers. But Brown's Mill lacks that racial diversity.**

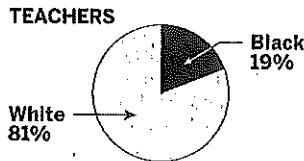
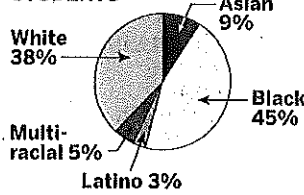
## Browns Mill School

Race/ethnicity % of total enrollment

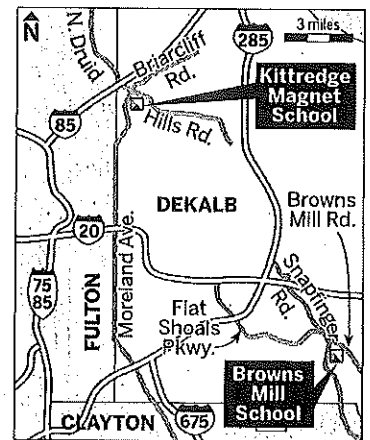


## Kittredge Magnet School

Race/ethnicity % of total enrollment



Sources: State Department of Education (October count), DeKalb County



DALE E. DODSON / Staff

That last point is key, said Eric A. Houck, education professor at the University of Georgia, because "the racial aspect wouldn't be as much of a factor within this context."

"Given that all of the children have been identified as academically gifted, the concern would be, regardless of a child's race, does every child have access to the same program," Houck said. "Do they have equal access to quality teachers, equal access to quality guidance [counselors], equal access to quality leadership?"

"That becomes the equity question," Houck said.

Browns Mill magnet teacher Paula Wilson said the program academically is "equal in many ways to Kittredge." The problem? "Many people are not even aware we're here. We're limited as to space."

Meanwhile, Kittredge, with its small campus and own dedicated principal and PTA, may relocate farther north to Chamblee, part of a sweeping redistricting proposal which over the next three years would also close five schools and redraw attendance lines for 18.

It is hard to tell whether expanding the Browns Mill magnet program would make

Kittredge less of a draw to students of color. Some say it would.

"I'm concerned... moving Kittredge north will hurt diversity," said Ann Pruitt, a Kittredge social studies teacher at a recent meeting with system officials. Those officials say the move would put Kittredge closer to the middle and high schools into which its students feed.

When asked about diversity and student enrollment, Robert Moseley, DeKalb's associate superintendent said he thinks it just comes down to parental choice. "We're just trying to develop a quality educational experience," he said.

Countywide, black students make up 76 percent of the school system's 102,000 enrollment.

Blacks and whites attend Kittredge in near-equal numbers. High test scores are required for entrance but don't guarantee admission; between one to three students from each neighborhood elementary school can get in, but space is also won through a lottery.

The Browns Mill magnet, considered a "school within a school," reserves half of its 190 seats for top-scoring neighborhood students. The rest

are open to a systemwide lottery that perennially produces a wait list. Magnet students share a building and comprise a small portion of Brown's Mill's 1,100-student body.

Both magnet programs offer only fourth, fifth and sixth grade. Both also offer daily foreign language instruction: Spanish at Brown's Mill; German at Kittredge.

They both emphasize the integration of the arts into regular lessons as well as small class sizes. At Browns Mill, for example, the magnet program runs between 17 to 21 students per teacher; in the school's regular program, class sizes for fourth and fifth grade have averaged as many as 33 students.

Yet, if nothing else, perception puts Kittredge on top. "It's the original," said Patricia Copeland, DeKalb coordinator of magnet and theme programs.

"A parent who puts their child into Kittredge, they want their child educated," said Toni Eichelberger, a south DeKalb mom who five years ago pulled her then-fourth-grader from Browns Mill because she was unhappy with his education.

Much of that unhappiness, Eichelberger said, stemmed from her perception that even the staff at Browns Mill were

"either on survival mode or they wanted] a promotion." And, she said, she did not try to enroll her son in Kittredge because "my personal belief is children should not spend hours commuting to a school and then be faced with multiple hours of homework at night." Eichelberger decided to home-school her son.

Lucas, the assistant principal, would not say the Browns Mill magnet program was equal then or now to Kittredge. But that, she believes, comes down to physical constraints.

"They've been a stand-alone since the day they opened," she said. At Browns Mill, "there are almost 1,100 students here. It is very different for space and resources."

Other teachers said, for lack of its own campus, they did not consider the Browns Mill magnet program equal with Kittredge. They noted that as their first concern, although no one is pooh-poohing any diversity that may follow, either.

"Sometimes we have students who never venture outside of this area," said Teresa Grant, who teaches math in the Browns Mill magnet program. "If we get our own building, we can expand our program."



# Try again on schools, critic says in DeKalb

Desegregation backer: magnet plan falls short

By Robert Anthony Watts  
Staff writer

DeKalb County schools' preliminary plan for an expanded magnet school program caters to white parents and is far too narrow to comply with a federal court's desegregation order, a plaintiff in the case said Tuesday. School Superintendent Robert R. Freeman on Monday suggested magnet programs for about 2,370 students. But Roger Mills, a plaintiff and vocal proponent of integration efforts since 1975, said he believes more than 10 times as many students would have to attend new schools to meet the court's requirements.

"You need to move about 25,000 students, and when the superintendent proposes a plan that is going to move or transfer about a few hundred, he's whistling Dixie," Mr. Mills said.

"He's pandering to the interests of the most conservative elements of the white community. . . . He's saying, 'How can I appease the white community and convince the court this is all I can do?'"

Mr. Mills has said he believes DeKalb should strive for blacks to comprise between 37 and 77 percent of the student population at each DeKalb school. One-third of the county's 100 schools fall within that range now.

School board Chairman Norma S. Bergman defended the plan unveiled Monday as an attempt to prevent white and middle-class flight from the school system.

"We're trying to do something that will work and not end up with a school system being 99 percent black and half the [current] size," she said. "If we don't do something the parents want, we'll lose not only white parents but black parents as well."

Sixty percent of white parents and one-fifth of black parents said they would pull their chil-

*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution  
Dec 13, 1989*

## Magnet schools not enough, critic says

Continued from D1  
 Children from DeKalb schools if they were to be bused for integration, according to an Atlanta Journal-Constitution poll in October. But a majority of whites and 80 percent of minorities said their children could be bused outside their neighborhood to attend a magnet school.

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Oct. 11 ruled DeKalb schools had not been fully desegregated and ordered the system to consider busing, radically redrawn attendance lines and expanded magnet programs. The U.S. Supreme Court last week declined to stay the ruling.

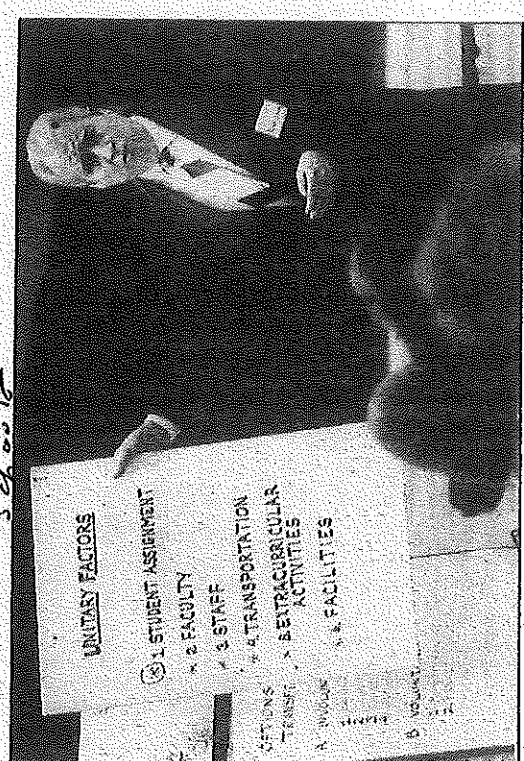
Under the magnet program described Monday by Dr. Freeman, an extended-day program offering tutoring and additional study halls would be offered for

kindergarten through the seventh grade at 11 schools. Seven schools would offer a specialized curriculum emphasizing science, math and computer technology.

School officials Tuesday cautioned that they are only tentatively discussing such a magnet program as an answer to the desegregation order. "We have not yet proposed any program at all," Deputy Superintendent William Strain said. "What we're doing is giving a sample of things that might be done and seeing what kind of reaction we get."

Meeting Monday with parents in predominantly black south DeKalb, Dr. Freeman emphasized he would like to achieve desegregation by voluntary methods and that magnet schools represented DeKalb's best chance to achieve that.

*Schools*



Greg Foster/Special DeKalb School Superintendent Robert Freeman uses visual aids to make a point at a meeting on magnet schools at Chestnut Elementary School. "DeKalb County has to consider whether he likes it or not, going to ask him; 'Did you consider busing? If so, how? If not, why not?'"

DeKalb News/Sun

## Magnet Programs In DeKalb Schools

10/18/89

One of several remedies in the order from the 11th Circuit Court was increasing magnet schools — schools which attract students. The DeKalb system currently has several magnet schools and programs in operation. They include:

- **Kittredge Magnet School For High Achievers**, located at Kittredge school, currently has an enrollment of 342 students. This year it serves grades four, five, six and seven. Long range plans are to add one grade per year to the school which attracts students county wide. The enrollment is 49.6% white, 44 % black 4.4. % oriental and 2.1 % other.

- **Scientific Tools and Technology (STT)** is offered at Fernbank Science Center for ninth grade students. Students attend one quarter of instruction in science and math. Sixty students are enrolled each quarter for a total yearly enrollment of 180.

- **Avondale School for the Performing Arts**, currently has 152 students, 108 of whom are black. Students receive special instruction in acting, dance, music and other performance arts.

- **Language Magnet** program housed at Kittredge is for students who want intensive instruction in foreign language. Students attend class for two hours each day, then return to their home school. 106 students are enrolled.

- **Math Magnet** program for elementary schools is offered at three different locations. Students may attend one year, or the entire sequence. Approximately 20 students are enrolled in each program. The fourth and fifth grades are housed at Kittredge, the sixth grade at Snapfinger, and the seventh grade at Brair Vista.

- **Pre-Kindergarten Magnet** is for four year-olds. Two pairs of schools offer this pilot. Allgood and Midway Elementary Schools are paired with classes offered for 36 students at Midway. Idlewood and Indian Creek are paired with 35 students in classes housed at Idlewood. These classes are racially balanced.

- **Open Campus** high school is considered a magnet school by the instruction department. Students may choose this school which offers intensive academic emphasis, and no extra curricular activities. The school has an enrollment of 915 students; 62% of whom are black.

- The **Occupation Education Centers**, one in north DeKalb, and one in south DeKalb, are considered magnet programs. They offer vocational and technical classes for students who attend part of each day, then return to their home schools. OEC-North has approximately 450 students, 46% of whom are black and 54% of whom are white. OEC-South has approximately 500 students, 82% of whom are black.

*DeKalb News Sun 1/10/90*

# NAACP Objects To Magnet School 'Plan' In DeKalb

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By SPENCER RAGSDALE  
The DeKalb NAACP has raised objections to preliminary plans for magnet schools that have been discussed as one response to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that the system must be desegregated using a variety of alternatives including magnet schools, school pairing and clustering, attendance line changes and busing.

Speaking at the public information portion of the DeKalb Board of Education's first meeting of the new year, Zepora Roberts, Chairperson of the DeKalb NAACP Education Committee read a six page statement which she said was concurred in by the plaintiffs in the *Pitts v. Freeman* suit.

She said, "The Superintendent's preliminary plan for an expanded magnet school program is fatally flawed because it simply will not desegregate all the schools and those it will desegregate, it will not desegregate enough to amount to anything. The plan calls for eight black elementary schools in South DeKalb to each receive 60 white students who would be attracted to leave their neighborhood

schools for an extended day program of 12 hours. In addition, seven more black schools would each receive 75 white students to attend a science technology program, one grade at each school, from grades three through 12....

"There are two major problems. First, both components added together would affect only 15 black schools. Yet there are a total of 32 heavily black schools in South DeKalb. The 17 remaining ones would be left unremedied...."

She cited the example of Columbia Elementary school which is 98% black. It would become 90% black if 60 whites were enrolled there in the magnet program. Overall, the magnet program would put 1,230 white students in an enrollment of 22,472 black students in the 32 heavily black South DeKalb schools.

As an alternative, she proposed some ideas she termed "sketchy and tentative." They would include magnet schools as a Center for Applied Knowledge, International, Classical Studies, Gifted and Talented, Discovery, Montessori, Ungraded and Teacher Research.

The statement proposed, "The enrollment at each magnet school would be racially controlled to approximate the systemwide student enrollment, which is 57% black. This could be done a number of ways, such as by separate black and white lottery pools where applications exceed seats available....

"Even though the schools should be attractive to whites, magnet schools do not magnetize unless the remaining alternative is less attractive. Each of the white schools in North DeKalb would be paired or clustered with a remaining black elementary school in South DeKalb. White students not choosing a magnet school could remain affiliated with their local school but would be a part of the pairing.

"The black students indigenous to the South DeKalb areas served previously by schools being converted to magnets, would have three choices. Each student could choose a magnet, transfer to a white school of his/her choice under the Majority to Minority (M to M) transfer option, or do nothing.

(See SCHOOLS, Page 6A)

## Schools

(Continued From Page 1)

ing and be assigned to a designated undercapacity white school....

"At the junior high and high school level, in general the seven black schools could be paired or clustered in some combination with the nine racially-identifiable white schools. Attendance lines would best be redrawn, bringing in schools inbetween so as to reduce overall transportation, such as Avondale-Shamrock-Tucker and Towers-Clarkston-Stone Mountain....

At the conclusion of Mrs. Roberts' statement, Supt. Robert R. Freeman commented, "If it will make you feel any better, I do not have a plan...I have always said that this is not a plan...that you have said is flawed..."

Mrs. Roberts said the NAACP statement was in response to remarks made at public meetings around the county.

*DeKalb News Sun 1/10/90*



# White response key to magnet plan

## DeKalb hoping to avoid busing

By Robert Anthony Watts  
Staff writer

DeKalb County school officials said Thursday they hope their plans to open eight magnet programs in majority-black south DeKalb schools next fall will satisfy a federal judge and allow the system to avoid mandatory busing.

"I know this is going to be in the direction the courts want," Superintendent Robert R. Freeman said.

U.S. District Judge William O'Kelley will decide whether the state's largest system has done enough to comply with an October desegregation order by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"He wants to see things happen," Dr. Freeman said of Judge O'Kelley, who ordered the system Feb. 26 to submit a desegregation plan for next fall. The plan is due next week, but the system has asked for an additional 14 days.

The success of the plan would depend on how many white students from north DeKalb decide to participate.

Whites "have responded to the other magnets we have," Dr. Freeman said. "They have responded to [programs in] other cities."

Among DeKalb's 73,000 students, 200 attend a performing arts magnet program at Avondale High School and 350 high-achieving elementary students attend one at Kittredge School. Students

in both magnets are evenly divided by race.

Dr. Freeman said officials plan to establish magnet schools — special programs designed to attract students — at six yet-to-be-identified south DeKalb elementary schools and two high schools. Among the magnet programs to be introduced are a math, science and computer curriculum, a performing arts package and a program for highly motivated students, he said.

The plaintiffs whose suit led to the desegregation order Thursday applauded DeKalb for moving to implement a plan for the 1990-91 school year but did not comment on its specifics. Previously, they had criticized the system's magnet-school plans as far too limited to achieve a broader desegregation of county schools.

"I hope there's community input," said Marcia W. Borowski, the attorney representing the plaintiffs in the 22-year-old desegregation case. "Beyond that, I've got to see [it] and take it to my clients and see what they think."

About 4,500 black students attend predominantly white schools through DeKalb's majority-to-minority (M-to-M) program, but only a handful of whites have applied for transfers to majority black schools.

Nationally, magnet school programs have become increasingly popular in recent years as school systems have sought to prevent the flight of white students from public schools.

Dr. Freeman said the system's magnet school program will be expanded even if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns the 11th

Circuit's ruling. The high court is expected to decide whether to hear DeKalb's appeal within 90 days.

After the Supreme Court rules, school officials expect to meet with Judge O'Kelley to receive guidance on how to proceed next fall, officials said.

The new magnet programs represent the first step in a broader effort to comply with the 11th Circuit Court's ruling, officials said. Eventually, all 32 schools with less than 20 percent white enrollment will have such programs, Dr. Freeman said.

Dr. Freeman said he is moving away from a previously proposed extended-day magnet program where students could stay at school from early morning to evening. The extended-day programs were aimed at working parents but drew lukewarm support when presented in December, he said.

The superintendent declined to rule out future pairing and clustering of white and black schools to create attendance districts with balanced racial populations. And asked if he was ruling out mandatory busing, he said, "I do not control the judge; the judge controls me."

Dr. Freeman's plans drew mixed reactions from school board members, however. Chairman Norma W. Bergman said she strongly supports the new magnet programs.

But Phil McGregor, the lone black on the seven-member board, said he had not been told about the plan. "He [Dr. Freeman], at least, has not shared with me any details of the plan," Mr. McGregor said.

Schools -

DeKalb Neighbor

9/26/90

# Magnet programs offer more

By Judith Bethel  
Neighbor Staff Writer

Some DeKalb County children now have access to training and facilities unavailable to their predecessors through the recent addition of magnet programs.

As technological advances continue to change the way things are done in the workplace and in the home, the DeKalb County School System is also making changes in the classroom.

So far, those changes are working out well, school officials say.

"Everything is going well so far and parents seem to be extremely pleased," said Chuck B. Hutcheson, executive director of magnet programs.

With two magnets for high achievers, two academies for math/science and technology, a computer education program, an academy for the performing arts, two performing arts centers and a writing academy at the elementary level — and the DeKalb Center for Performing Arts and the Foreign Language Center on the secondary level — magnet programs are now serving 5,000 students.

While touring magnet facilities at Avondale and Towers high schools and Snapfinger Elementary School, officials stressed how important community interaction is to the success of the program.

"We are trying to foster a good relationship with the people in our community," said Dr. Lonnie Edwards, executive director of the community and staff relations' department.

"Our schools operate with the support of three essential components, the home, the school and the community," he said.

The tour, attended by school officials, some board members and the media, was an opportunity for people to see the magnet schools' programs and facilities first-hand.

Avondale High School's Center for the Performing Arts, offers courses including dance, drama, vocal and instrumental music.

Its facilities include Kyle Theater, a 300-seat auditorium, complete with an orchestra pit and a computerized sound and lighting booth. The complex also has rehearsal rooms for instrumental and vocal music.

The performing arts magnet is in its fourth year and has 300 students. It's broken into two components: classroom artistic instruction, offered at beginning, intermediate and advanced levels; and performance development, in which students participate in several productions and recitals each year.

The Towers High School Foreign Language Magnet offers courses in Chinese, Japanese, Russian, French, German and Spanish. This

program is structured differently from the others in that students must travel from their home schools to Towers each day for instruction.

Students also have the option to go to higher levels in a given language at a magnet program than in other schools.

Snapfinger Elementary School, whose principal, Crawford Lewis, took charge a few weeks before the school year began, is a science and technology magnet.

The school has laboratories equipped with IBM Computers and state-of-the-art scientific instruments including measurement tables, microscopes and a video display monitor, which allows students to see enlarged versions of their microscopic subjects and more.

"We don't limit access to the computers to only our magnet children," he said. "I have worked especially hard to get away from a 'two schools being run under one roof' approach. Any class can use the labs; teachers just have to sign up on the schedule for a specific time."

The new principal said he was pleased with the way things are going so far.

"If the last three weeks are indicative of what's to come, I will be extremely pleased with the way the school year will turn out," he said.

# Mirror Magnet Plan Due In Three Weeks

DeKalb News Sun  
6/19/91

56

Response has been positive to action by the DeKalb Board of Education to create a new magnet school, according to Superintendent Robert R. Freeman, but it will be from two to three weeks before plans will be firm enough to disclose.

At its formal meeting in June, the board diverted \$450,000 from a magnet school for four year-olds that had attracted only 40 students in each of two locations. The superintendent was instructed to make preliminary plans for a new magnet and report to the board at its work session in July.

Two schools have already come forward asking for the new magnet, Dr. Freeman said.

These schools want to offer the science-math component or the foreign language component.

There have been three or four suggestions the superintendent said, but it is too preliminary to discuss these plans. He told the board last week that he hoped that the new magnet school would be a mirror magnet which would duplicate an already successful magnet school now in operation, but in another geographic area of the county.

The target will be the approximately 2,000 students who applied to the magnet program but could not be placed in existing schools. Of these, approximately 1,500 are black applicants and 500 are white applicants.

In his early discussions, Dr. Freeman said that he was considering creating a mirror of the most successful magnet school, the performing arts magnet on the cam-

pus of Avondale High School.

Dr. Freeman said he was pleased with the success of the magnet concept so far, even though he is sometimes attacked by parents when he wants to make changes in the magnet formats. "If you have a magnet that doesn't maximize its potential, it is hard to phase it down," Dr. Freeman said. "The schools are successful and do have followers. I have had parents come to talk to me about magnet schools and talk as though I have never heard of them — when I was the one who proposed the magnet in the first place."

But that is not necessarily bad, the superintendent said. "When the ownership of the idea is trans-

(See MIRROR, Page 6A)

## Mirror

6/19/91

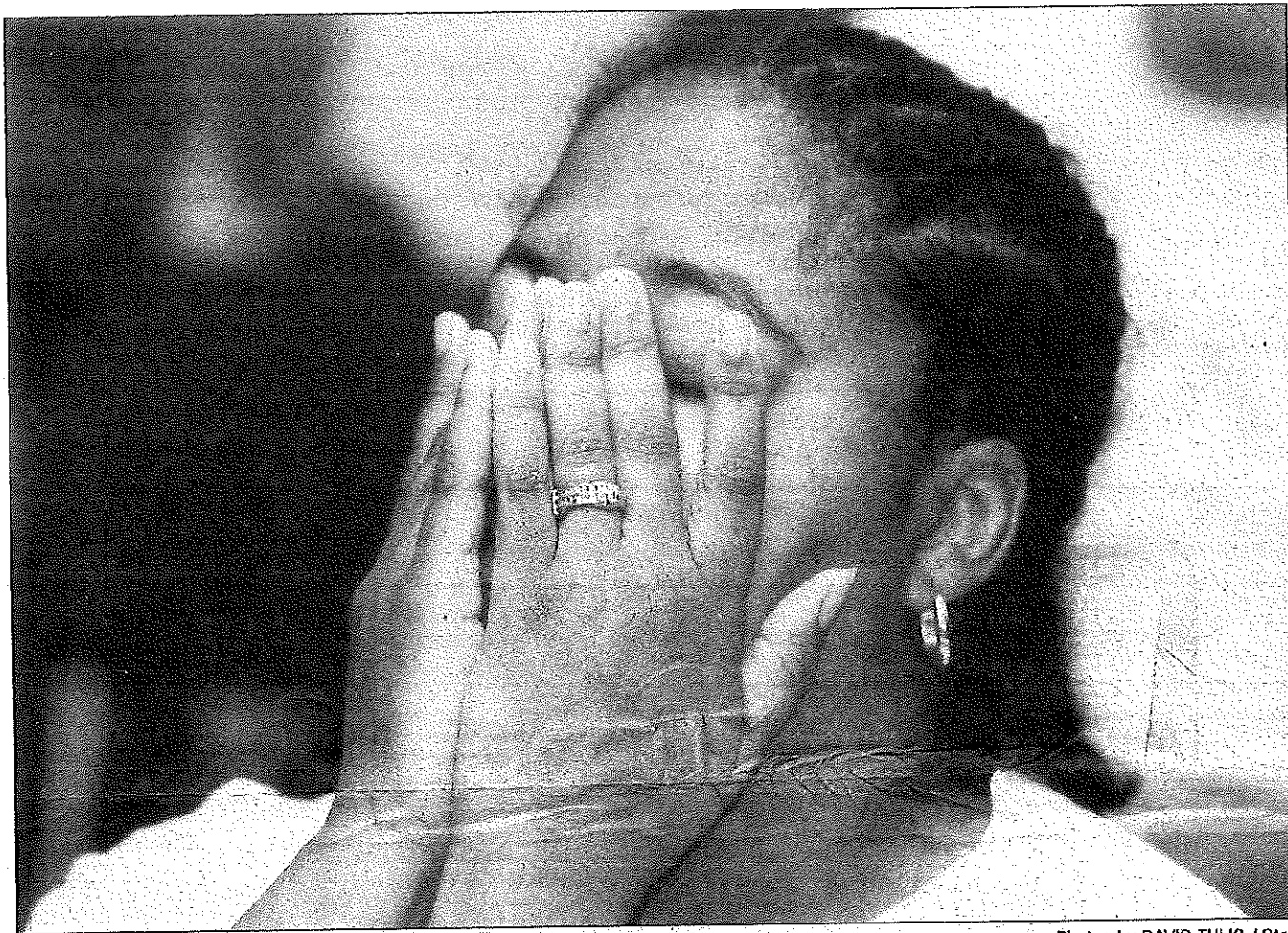
(Continued From Page 1A)

ferred like that, then it is good for the school," he said.

"And magnets in general are good for the home school. We try to make them a theme school," he said, "such as foreign languages or computers. Much of the magnet school program bleeds into the general welfare of the general school. For example if we have a computer magnet, and there are two periods a day in which the computers are not being used for computer classes, then the general school can use them."

9/12/01 AJC

# School lottery tests emotions



Photos by DAVID TULIS / Staff

## Kittredge Magnet's selectivity divides DeKalb parents

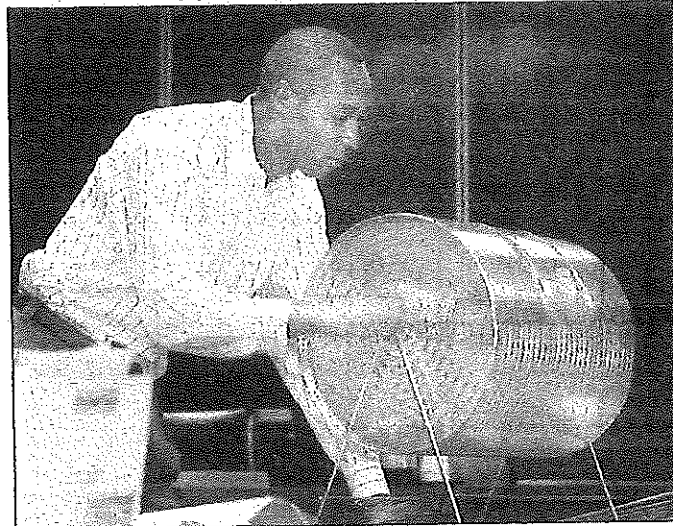
By PATTI GHEZZI  
pghezzi@ajc.com

Some raised their fists in victory. Others clapped, stomped their feet or leaped from their seats and scurried into the lobby to share the good news over their cellphones.

For these parents, a piece of paper drawn from a brass barrel Wednesday meant their child can attend DeKalb County's top-rated Kittredge Magnet School, the school with the highest test scores in Georgia.

For the losers, not getting chosen left the bitter feeling that a child's education shouldn't be determined in a random drawing.

"The thing that's hurtful is these kids are eligible, but for the luck of the draw



**Dalia Harris** (above) is relieved as she hears her son's name called out to attend Kittredge Magnet School. Teacher **Everett Edwards** (left) rolls the lottery cage for the controversial drawing Wednesday at the DeKalb County school board office.

they can't get into Kittredge," said Donna Edler, who retreated to her car and cried when her son Darryl's name was not picked. "I've been hoping for the Kittredge program since before he was old enough to go to school."

The annual Kittredge lottery, held

Wednesday at DeKalb school board headquarters, is always a surreal scene, filled with anxiety as parents wait up to three hours for their child's name to be drawn. Many parents consider the

➤ PLEASE SEE School lottery, A8

# Second DeKalb lottery fills most magnet slots

By JEN SANBURY  
jsansbury@ajc.com

11/21/02

Three months into the school year, all but one of the coveted empty seats in DeKalb County elementary magnet programs were finally filled Wednesday.

In the second round of lottery drawings, 536 students contended for 145 elementary, middle and high school seats in the district's six high-achiever magnet programs. Seventy-nine of the 80 elementary slots were filled, but 35 of 65 openings in the upper grades weren't filled because there weren't enough eligible applicants.

A second admission lottery was needed because state-wide problems and delays with two different standardized tests before the beginning of the school year left officials unable to determine whether nearly a third of the more than 1,600 students who applied were qualified.

The winning elementary students will start their new classes after the Thanksgiving break. Middle and high school students will start in January.

By far the highest demand was for Kittredge Magnet School, considered the best elementary school in the state by the Georgia Public Policy Foundation.



# School Plaintiffs Decision Expected

By HELEN ORDNER

Judge William O'Kelley, seeking a "common voice" from parents of black children, did not find it last week in his courtroom.

He doesn't expect there will ever be one, he said, but he promised that his ruling will endeavor to protect their rights, whether their voices "are repugnant to some one else, or even the court."

He is expected to rule soon on whether the plaintiffs, who oppose the school system, will be the long-standing ones, the recently formed Armstrong Group, or a court-ordered melding.

THE VOICES had definite views as spokesmen for black parents clashed on the direction in which their children's schools should go. There was agreement on

the desire for a unitary system, but not on whether busing is the way to get there.

Marcia Borowski, attorney for the current plaintiffs in the 22-year-old case, charged that attorneys for the opposing Armstrong Group, have been "dishonest" in representing the law to their clients — "that they can go back to separate, but equal."

The law, she said, requires "maximum feasible desegregation." The Eleventh Circuit Court decision, she added, says that busing must be considered. "If voluntary methods don't work, we have to face reality."

"Fear of busing" has grown until the real issue of quality edu-

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*DeKalb News-Sun*  
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## Schools

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cation is overlooked, she said.

Armstrong Group attorneys maintained that the majority of black parents disagreed with the stand taken by current plaintiffs and had been ignored, leaving their clients essentially unrepresented.

They asked for equality in schools, and stated there is no constitutional right to racial balance in classrooms.

The school system, according to attorney Stan Hawkins, has been caught in the middle of a conflict between members of the plaintiff party.

He insisted to the judge how-

ever, that the system did not want to be in a position to pay fees to more than one group if it ended up on the losing side in a dispute.

He clearly backed Armstrong parents, saying that school attorneys think that the plaintiff spokesmen must represent majority views.

"You can't be an adequate class representative if you are pursuing relief contrary to the views of the majority of the class."

He also charged that the plaintiff's attorney should have informed the court of conflict among DeKalb's black parents about the case.

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# DeKalb's Black Parents Oppose Busing, Poll Says

DeKalb News Sun  
6/20/90

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By SPENCER RAGSDALE

Most black parents in DeKalb are opposed to mandatory busing, and strongly favor neighborhood schools, according to a poll commissioned by the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce.

The Atlanta-based minority firm of H. Ross Enterprises, Inc. polled 635 black families in DeKalb County by telephone.

Harry L. Ross, president of the polling firm said, "Questions which focused on the busing issue yielded these results: 65.2% of the participants did not support mandatory busing to achieve racial

balance and 48.7% did not support mandatory busing to achieve quality education. In fact, busing was not popular in the poll at all, as 69.6% of the parents did not support mandatory busing just to achieve racial balance if they were guaranteed equal distribution of educational funds and facilities in all schools in the DeKalb County School System."

Mr. Ross said as far as his research can disclose, this type of polling has never been done for another major school system to determine the feelings of black parents.

According to David Chesnut, board chairman of the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce, "Nobody ever asked this vast group what their opinions are...we in the white community have just made assumptions of what they think."

He said, "We have a white male married to a minority female who is now divorced and in a non-custodial position with his children...and a white lawyer saying what black parents want in the 20-year-old school desegregation case."

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## Poll

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Mr. Chesnut was referring to Roger Mills, one of the named plaintiffs in the class action suit. DeKalb school system has been in the courts since 1969 in the desegregation case styled *Pitts v. Freeman*. The case was appealed by the plaintiffs to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. That court reversed the Federal District Court and said the system is not desegregated, and that busing must be considered among the remedies to remove the vestiges of the dual school system that once existed by law.

The school system has appealed the decision of the Eleventh Circuit to the U.S. Supreme Court. So far the Supreme Court has neither accepted nor rejected the DeKalb school case.

At last week's press conference, Mr. Chesnut formally transmitted the poll results to Juanita Baranco, a member of the Georgia Board of Education and Co-Chair

of the DeKalb Schools Citizens Advisory Group.

Mrs. Baranco said, "Many fears in the white community are based on the feelings that black parents want busing. They don't..."

Asked for her reaction to the poll, Mrs. Baranco said, "This was the feeling that I had from talking to people, but until now I had no formal way to back my feelings up..."

Said Mr. Ross: "We now have the voice of the black parents speaking to such critical issues..."

"Integration," said Mrs. Baranco, "is the ideal situation...but in formulating a desegregation plan you must formulate priorities...the number one priority of black parents is quality education..."

She said that the poll will become a part of the information now being collected by the Citizens Advisory Committee as a basis for recommendations to the DeKalb Board of Education.



RICH MAHAN/Staff

Erica Rockstroh moves her belongings into her new classroom at Gresham Park Elementary School. Mrs. Rockstroh, who has 28 years' experience as a teacher, was transferred from Woodward Elementary School.

## DeKalb's Teachers Get Settled

8-18-89 The Atlanta Journal

By Anne Cowles

Staff Writer

Erica Rockstroh surveyed her new classroom Thursday at Gresham Park Elementary School, with its bare bulletin board, cardboard boxes of supplies and yellow plastic chairs stacked on top of child-sized tables.

Mrs. Rockstroh and her teaching assistant, Blanche Louise Hall, moved furniture, sorted through supplies, contemplated where to set up kindergarten reading groups and envisioned a bulletin board with clowns, balloons, numbers and shapes to greet students on Aug. 23, the first day of school in DeKalb County.

Mrs. Rockstroh, who has 28 years of experience, was among 114 veteran DeKalb teachers reassigned by lottery this year in response to a federal court order to equalize teacher experience between DeKalb's predominantly white schools and its majority black schools.

### First Day of School Nears; Resentment On Lottery Put Aside

The 59-year-old teacher, who was transferred from Woodward Elementary School, drew No. 26 in last month's lottery. Although she is still critical of the way the lottery was conducted by the DeKalb school system, Mrs. Rockstroh said she will make her new job at Gresham Park a positive experience for herself and her students.

"I'm going to have a wonderful year," she said Thursday. "But the school system ruined my summer. The lottery just was not a good experience. It should have been done in a way that

was not so tension-producing.

"But this is going to work," she added. "I feel very positively about Gresham Park. Children are children, no matter where you go."

One of her new colleagues, Annie Laurie Glaseo who taught at McLendon Elementary School for 19 years before being transferred to Gresham Park, voiced similar resentment about the lottery.

"I thought it showed a lack of concern for our feelings," she said. "But ... I'm glad the whole thing is over. I'm ready to get down to business."

DeKalb was ordered in June 1988 by U.S. District Judge William C. O'Kelley to place more of its highly trained and experienced teachers at its predominantly black schools.

The 1988 order followed a study that showed instructors at predominantly