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MEMORANDUM April 4, 1983

To: Integration Task Force

From: Carlin Plaintiffs CSS

Subject: Comments on District Report No. 345, Effective Factors Of Student Achievement In Minority-Isolated Schools, dated February 22, 1983.

On February 22, 1983, the School District issued preliminary findings on Effective Factors Of Student Achievement In Minority-Isolated Schools. The report identified 28 factors which appeared to differentiate high-performing minority-isolated schools from low-performing minority-isolated schools. The report carefully pointed out that the preliminary nature of the study did not justify drawing cause-and-effect conclusions from the data.

Among other recommendations, the report called for further examination of the data and development of an analysis design which would "refine and sharpen the focus of the study", as well as an investigation of "interaction patterns among the factors".

Plaintiffs agree strongly with the need for caution in applying these tentative findings until cause-and-effect relationships have been established between the factors and student performance. In addition, the analysis should also determine how much of the variation in performance is due to each factor or combinations of factors.

Until cause-and-effect relationships, and the strengths of those relationships, are determined, actions based upon the study may be inappropriate and ineffective. For example, it may turn out that most of the difference in performance between the high-performing schools and the low-performing schools is the result of high achieving students being drawn to magnet programs in high-performing schools while high achieving students are leaving low-performing schools to participate in VEEP. Very little of the difference may be the result of more classroom visits by principals in the high-performing schools. If this is true, little improvement may result from more classroom visits by principals in low-performing schools. This is not an argument

against more visits to classrooms by principals, but rather for efforts which will maximize gains, and against raising false expectations. It could be frustrating, wasteful, and possibly demoralizing, for schools to expend a great deal of energy on factors which have little effect.

The study raises other questions. Why are 88% of the identified weaknesses found in grades 4, 5 and 6? Test results in general show minority students performing at or near national norms in the First Grade, but falling behind as they progress through school. Why is this so? Also, why is the performance of minority students significantly higher in mathematics than in language and reading?

The report notes that sophisticated statistical techniques were not used because the unit of study was the school, resulting in a small sample size, and the data involved many estimates.

Plaintiffs recommend a design be developed which treats each school as a sample, with the sample size composed of the several hundred students enrolled in the school. This would permit the application of statistical techniques which could generate significant results, leading to possible conclusions concerning cause-and-effect relationships.

Some of the data needed for this analysis would be test data separated into several categories: minority and non-minority; resident and non-resident, (in magnet schools); VEEP and non-VEEP students. In the past plaintiffs have requested test results separated into these categories in order to perform some of this analysis, but we have been unable to obtain it because of its cost. The Court has also expressed and interest in such data and has requested a report from the School District on what it would cost to produce it.

In conclusion, plaintiffs strongly endorse the recommendations in the report for further study, with emphasis on a more refined design using data which will establish cause-and-effect relationships, thus permitting effectively focused action to improve individual student achievement in low-performing shools.