FASTFORWARD CONSULTING

Program design and evaluation

2004-02-07

To: Director of Diversity and Student Services
        Keillor-Gustafson School Board

Re: Proposal to Evaluate District Desegregation Policy

FastForward Consulting is pleased to have this opportunity to work with Keillor-Gustafson School Board to facilitate the evaluation of the district's desegregation policy with the Director of Diversity and Student Services.

The evaluation process can provide the necessary information to senior officials for decision-making purposes. Given the complex environment in which the Keillor-Gustafson School Board operates, FastForward Consulting can provide policy evaluation results that provide evidenced-based information to contribute to future policy development.

Our consulting team has completed our evaluation strategy of the district's desegregation policy. We have designed a comprehensive evaluation plan and included our proposed communications plan and budget. If the district chooses to proceed with this strategy, we look forward to the opportunities and challenges that this project provides.

Thank you for this opportunity, and should you have any questions or comments regarding this initial summary please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Fast Forward Consulting

Table of Contents

Purpose of the Evaluation

FastForward Consulting has been asked by the Director of Diversity and Student Services (the Director) with the Keillor-Gustafson School Board to assist in the evaluation of the district's desegregation policy. Our company was awarded the contract to provide a comprehensive evaluation plan. The school board faces complex environments both internally and externally. In order to most effectively address the multi-faceted issues faced by the board with respect to desegregation, we have designed a comprehensive evaluation plan to ensure that all of the salient information is considered in the policy process.

Background Information

The Keillor-Gustafson School Board has a large number of directors and other staff who may influence the desegregation policy. Figure One shows FastForward Consulting's understanding of the board structure. We will work with the Director to ensure we clearly understand the relationships during the evaluation process.

Figure One: Keillor-Gustafson School Board Organization Chart
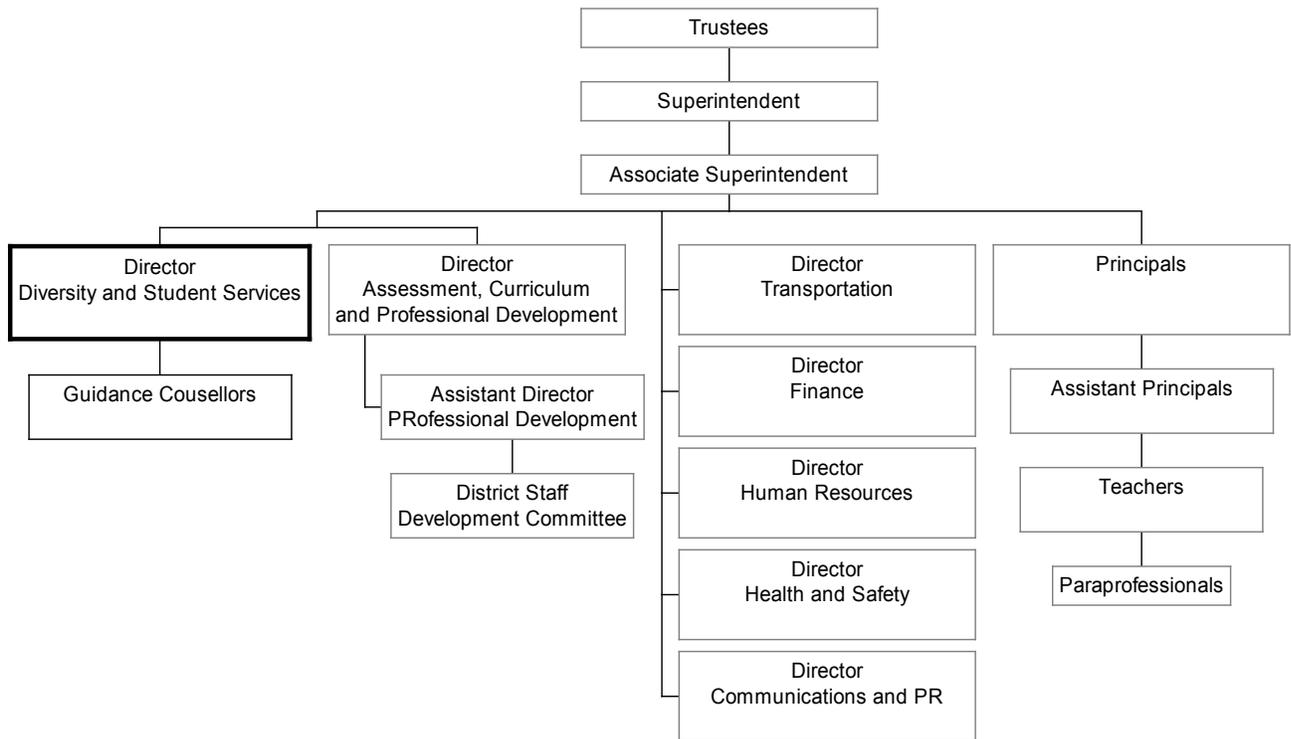
In addition to the various groups within the Board, there are also a large number of stakeholders whose positions on desegregation influence the effectiveness of implementation of policies. Figure Two illustrates the key stakeholders to be considered within the evaluation framework. They include the State Department of Education and the other school districts that are undertaking evaluations. Other groups include those

more closely involved with the desegregation policy as it operates within the board, including unions and individuals such as parents and students.

Figure Two: Key Stakeholders for the Board's Desegregation Policy
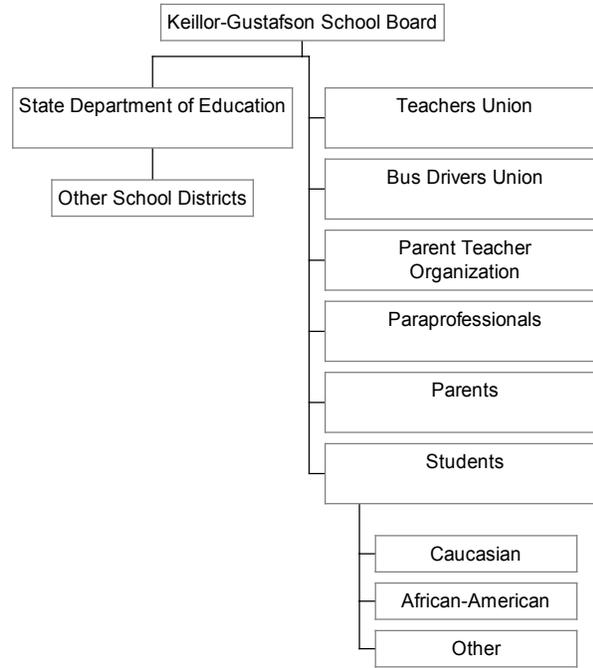
Evaluation Design

Due to the large number of stakeholders who have interests in the desegregation process, Fastforward Consulting suggests that the Director incorporate elements of both formative and outcome evaluation models, both of which will be participatory in nature. In a formative evaluation model, the focus is on understanding the process and implementation of the program to find out what is happening so that adjustments, if required, can be made. However, the board also needs to know what specific impacts the current desegregation policy is having. Outcomes with respect to general effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of current initiatives are necessary. We are limiting the scope of the evaluation, particularly with respect to cost-effectiveness, the 75% of the Director's budget allocated for desegregation and diversity.

In order to achieve these goals, our team suggests using qualitative methods to gather information that fits within the formative evaluation model framework and a quantitative methodology to explore the results of current initiatives and potential explanations for them.

Qualitative Methods

In examining the current implementation of the desegregation policy by the Board, FastForward Consulting will first meet with key informants to discuss the issues surrounding the desegregation policy. These key informants include:
- Director of Diversity and Student Services
- Director of Assessment, Curriculum and Professional Development
- President of the Teachers Union
- President of the Bus Drivers Union
- Head of the Parent Teachers Organization

These interviews will allow us to collect rich amounts of information on this complex issue. Our skilled interviewers have extensive experience to ensure that we are best able to gain the appropriate information. Appendix B contains information on our proposed Key Informant Interviews.

We will also hold focus groups to determine whether program elements are being delivered as intended. The tasks that will be evaluated within this framework are:
- Professional Development for Teachers
- Professional Development for Guidance Counselors
- Multicultural Resource Center and Curriculum Materials
- Recruitment and retention of minority candidates
- Student Mentorship Program
- Laptop and Videoconferencing for students

Separate focus groups will be held with teachers, guidance counselors, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, minority teachers and student mentors. This is important, as all of these groups will have distinct perspectives and issues of interest. Focus groups generally provide extensive contextual information that can be used not only for analysis on its own, but to contribute to the development of appropriate quantitative tools. FastForward's skilled moderators have years of experience in conducting focus groups in a wide variety of setting and with many different groups of individuals. A general guide will be used to generate discussion from the groups. Specific questions may be asked in certain cases to ensure that the participant input is valid. Appendix B contains information on our proposed Focus Group Discussion Guide.

Quantitative Methods

The School Board has a vast amount of administrative data on students at its disposal. Often, this information is overlooked as a source for analysis, however, we believe that the individual student, as well as school information, coupled with the appropriate statistical analysis can provide the School Board with relevant information about trends and correlations that relate directly to the desegregation policy. The Appendices provided by the Board show that information on race, location, test scores and disciplinary rates are kept. Some other types of data that may be collected may be bus

driver records. Coupled with further information that the Board already has, as well as through surveys developed by our team, FastForward Consulting is confident that we can provide relevant quantitative information for the desegregation policy-making process.

Surveys

Surveys are widely used, inexpensive tools that provide the cost-effective information gathering. Customized surveys will be designed and implemented to identify strengths and weaknesses of the programs used within the Keillor-Gustafson district. Specifically, we recommend utilizing stratified random surveys to further maximize cost effectiveness. Appendix C contains information on our proposed survey questions.

Stratified Random Sample Surveying

FastForward Consulting recommends that the Board use stratified random sample surveying as the primary means of collecting additional quantitative data. Since the schools are composed of Caucasian, African-American and other racial groups, we would proposed to use these strata and oversample (that is, have a higher proportion of) African-American and other racial group respondents. Since Caucasians comprise the majority of the school systems, we would want to ensure that the minority views are accurately represented through this method. We propose to use computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) software to administer telephone surveys to our survey groups. This has proven to be extremely effective and cost-efficient. In order to prevent interviewer bias, we will ensure that interviewers of the same race call those to be surveyed. The only potential downfall of this particular approach is if there is a large number of individuals who cannot be reached by telephone. This may be particularly a problem with individuals of low socio-economic status, and may bias the results. Consultations with key informants and reviews of administrative data will provide information as to whether this approach can be effectively implemented. Detailed quantitative data analysis techniques will be used to eliminate biases and guard against sampling errors to ensure the accuracy of the data.

Issues and Indicators

Listed in the following table are issues, indicators, and the data sources to be used to address them. We expect that these may change upon further consultation with key stakeholders.

Issues :	Indicators:	Data Sources:
Increased awareness of cultural diversity into classroom management, curriculum development and assessment		
Teachers: • Understanding of diversity • Type of techniques taught and their relevance in application • Skills required and existing gaps	• Number of training attended • Training received • The extent to which the programme is effective • Performance of students and improvement in handling cultural barriers	• Focus groups of the teachers and students • Surveys • Classroom reports generated on a regular basis

• Techniques used in class • Capacity to handle the issues at hand. The number of teachers versus the number of students they are responsible for • Effectiveness of the Teach the teacher methodology • Areas of focus for the improvement of students through integration into classroom • Utility of the curriculum and learning material	• Number of teachers recruited and the diversity in the mix of teachers at the school. • The quality of performance of the trained teachers vis-à-vis the trained ones • Provision for teachers in the feedback process and what mechanism sin place to do that	
Increased awareness of cultural diversity into classroom management, curriculum development and assessment		
Guidance and Counselling professionals • Understanding of diversity • Integration of cultural issues in the guidance and counselling • Specific techniques that create balance between the various cultures represented at the school	• Role plays and the application of the skills in guiding and counselling activities at school • Improvement of behaviour and the school to work transition of the students resulting from the guidance and counselling • The intercultural communication amongst the students and teachers • Success in the approaches that used to resolve racial and ethnic related conflicts • The improvement in performance of the students that have been through counselling sessions and their change in attitude of the students and teachers that are involved in the counselling	• Focus groups • • Records of the students from the guidance and counsellors • • Students feedback
Increased interracial contact through the mentoring programme, application of the skills and knowledge imparted in and outside school		
Students • How effective is the mentoring programme • The type of opportunities that are provided by this programme to interact in interracial circles • The choice of mentors and how that affects the protégés • The inclusion of all races and ethic groups • The value that the laptop and video technology programme and its overall impact on the programme • Benefit of the guidance and	• Training of the mentors and use of their skill in the programme • Selection method used in recruiting mentors • The feedback from the protégés on how comfortable they are with the mentors and whether the relationship has any positive results in and out of school • The assessment of the students who need mentors and the extent to which all of those students needs are met • The actual need and effectiveness of the laptop computers and video technology in improvement of their interracial contact • The interactivity of the technology to	• Focus groups • Surveys

Cost-Effectiveness and Alternatives		
Paraprofessionals	• The number of cases handled by the paraprofessionals and how many of	• Focus groups • Paraprofessional
Paraprofessionals • How effective is specialized orientation assistance • The type of support issues that are provided by this programme to interact in interracial circles • Communication lines exist between the paraprofessional and teachers on disciplinary issues • The choice of mentors and how that affects the protégés • The inclusion of all races and ethic groups • The value that the laptop and video technology programme and its overall impact on the programme • Benefit of the guidance and counselling programme	• These number of cases handled by their skill profiles and how many of been • Number of disciplinary cases have been • The feedback from the counsellors in the places to see how they deal with the students • The programme of the students that have been assisted by the paraprofessionals • The practical and effectiveness of the laptop computers and video technology in improvement of their interracial contact • The interactivity of the technology to allow for this contact • The manner in which feedback is given to the counsellors and teachers • The extent to which they see the guidance and counselling programme as beneficial and application of the advise given	• Focus groups School • Reports or the individual and School reports on the • individual students assisted • Surveys

Parents Teachers Organization • The satisfaction or dissatisfaction levels with the current programme	• Consideration for their opinion on the success of the programme • Suggestion on specific actions to be undertaken in cases where they suggest change	• Focus groups
Minority Teachers • The increase in levels of these teachers in the various schools • Sensitization training and cultural diversity issues • Help in transition to the new environment • Recruitment pools	• Numbers of minority teachers included • Training attended • Levels of competency of recruited teachers • Overall impact of minority teachers in the various schools	• Focus groups

Bus Drivers • Their observations on the students they transport • The adequacy of the buses • The recruitment and consideration for racial diversity	• Their opinion on the behaviour of students in the bus and suggestions on how this could be improved • Their observation as to which schools the misbehaving students belong • The training and sensitization of bus drivers on racial diversity issues and the extent to which the bus drivers are drawn from the various races and ethic groups in the schools in the district.	• Focus Groups
Use of Multicultural Student Library • The utilization levels of the materials	• The number of books used or borrowed by students • Knowledge of what is available • Relevance of the books to cultural diversity	• Surveys • Focus Groups

Risks and Challenges

The evaluation of the current desegregation policy faces a number of risks and challenges. FastForward Consulting has identified some of the key issues, along with a description and potential ways to mitigate exposure. We expect that as we gather information from key informants that this list will evolve.

Key risks and challenges include:
- Public policy being non-supportive of desegregation –Administrators believe unitary status to be financially desirable for many administrators in order to cut costs and maximize resources. However, even if costs are greater, they may be outweighed by important social benefits not currently recognized. This evaluation process can investigate these effects and provide solid data on the issue.
- Lack of follow-up for the multicultural development program: The program relies on a 'teach the teacher' approach, with each teacher pledging to train ten more teachers. There is no information as to whether this occurs, and if it does, if it is effective. Our evaluation will provide this information.

- No accountability mandate for Multicultural Resource center materials – Accountability mechanisms for the $10,000 for multicultural library materials do not currently exist. We propose to work with the Director of Finance and obtain information about his audit to incorporate into the evaluation.
- Recruitment of minority teachers – The number of minority teachers affects the race relationships within a school and overall, throughout the board. Decisions on how this can be done effectively, given that the board has chosen not to adopt affirmative action hiring, is something that needs to be raised in the focus groups.
- Laptop Program Accountability: Of all of the programs in the desegregation policy, this one is the least clearly related to desegregation goals. Through key informant interviews and key stakeholder focus groups, we will examine whether this program is an appropriate component of the program.
- Math at Work Program – While the Assistant Directors of Curriculum and Assessment are presently doing an evaluation of the program, its relationship to desegregation is tenuous at best. Part of the evaluation process will involve determining what is outside the scope of the project. This also relates to the issues of statewide testing and whether academic performance should be part of the desegregation policy evaluation.
- Fears of racism – Principals may try to derail desegregation evaluation for fear of being accused of racism. As part of the evaluation process, FastForward Consulting, as an independent firm, can allay these concerns both by being a third party and providing reassurances of confidentiality.
- Goals of Department of Education – While the state wishes to have 'substantive' racial integration in each school, they have not quantified this or specified target numbers.
- Political pressure – School districts that do not meet test standards may be taken over by the state in two years. This is a particular challenge since the evaluation is timed with election of school board members, who have the power to accept or reject recommendations.
- Divergent views – There may be divergent opinions of stakeholders that cannot be reconciled. This must be addressed during the early stages of consultations with key informants.

Overall risk of implementation in the United States that may affect the performance of the overall success of the entire school board desegregation program is that the implementation is voluntary given the unitary status. Policy at the national level is not binding and may be a disincentive to districts and negatively impact the continuity of the process.

Reporting and Communications

FastForward Consulting understands that the Board is making a considerable investment in the evaluation process. We strive to ensure that there are open lines of communication with our clients at all times. In addition, we incorporate communications checkpoint meetings throughout our evaluation process to ensure that our clients are aware of progress made to date, any outstanding issues or challenges and to learn if our clients have changing circumstances to communicate to us.

Upon the approval of our evaluation plan and relevant modifications that may be necessary, Fastforward will begin the evaluation process and submit short status reports delivered at regular intervals throughout the evaluation cycle. The status reports will be aligned to the checkpoint meeting discussions with the Director and follow up discussions of the preliminary findings. We will also review and discuss the draft report with the Director before developing the final report. Fastforward Consulting will deliver the complete evaluation report detailing all the key areas reflected in the plan along the arising recommendations.

We will work with the Board to advise on the dissemination of the results to all the various stakeholders through a steering committee that may comprise of the key informants that include:

- Director of Diversity and Student Services
- Director of Assessment, Curriculum and Professional Development
- President of the Teachers Union
- President of the Bus Drivers Union
- Head of the Parent Teachers Organization

The communication will help reduce intolerances and eliminate fears on the effect of the results upon their positions, the controversy surrounding the desegregation programme, the importance of the programme to the rating of the school and cultural diversity involved.

Below, we have outlined the tasks to be completed during the evaluation, including communications meetings. Our budget is activity-based and detailed by level of effort. Our consulting rates are $1,000 per day and we have indicated the number of days and total cost for each task.

Task Timelines

Week:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Activity												
Key Informant Meetings	X											
Development of Focus Group Questions		X	X									
Development of Survey Questions			X	X	X							

Activity												
Checkpoint Meeting with Director					X							
Administration of Focus Groups				X	X							
Administration of Surveys						X	X					
Gathering of Student Administrative Data			X	X								
Analysis of Information						X	X	X	X			
Discussion of Preliminary Findings									X			
Development of Draft Report										X		
Review and Presentation of Draft Report											X	
Development and Delivery of Final Report												X

Budget

Activity	Person-Days of Effort	Activity Cost
Key Informant Meetings	5	$5,000
Development of Focus Group Questions	3	$3,000
Development of Survey Questions	15	$15,000
Checkpoint Meeting with Director	2	$2,000
Administration of Focus Groups	10	$10,000
Administration of Surveys	10	$10,000
Gathering of Student Administrative Data	5	$5,000
Analysis of Information	25	$25,000
Discussion of Preliminary Findings	2	$2,000
Development of Draft Report	10	$10,000
Review and Presentation of Draft Report	3	$3,000
Development of Final Report	5	$5,000
Total	100 days	$100,000

Conclusion

In view of the challenges involved in the desegregation programming at the Keillor-Gustafan School Board, FastForward Consulting recommends formative and outcome evaluations to determine satisfaction levels of the stakeholders in the programme, the quality of the programme and the benefit of the program to the various stakeholders involved.

The logic model of the program as outlined in the background and information provided by the stakeholders will be used to determine any existing gaps between the actual and desired results of the programme. The general of the evaluation will be participatory to ensure that the divergent opinions of all the stakeholders are incorporated in the evaluation process to determine the relevance and overall success of the desegregation plan.

Both qualitative and quantitative data and information will be gathered from the various sources using a variety of methods with due consideration of the various stakeholders that have been identifies in the plan. We hope that our findings will be a valuable asset in the successful establishment of desegregation policies.

Appendix A: Key Informant Interview Guide

Name of Interviewee:
Type of Project:
Date of Interview
: Type of Interview:

Background Information on the Key Informants
· What is or was your position or role within the project or program?
· How, why and when did you become involved in the project or program?
· What is your current involvement in the project or program?

General Information Regarding the Project
· What did the project intend to do? Describe the community that this project or program has impacted?
· Would you say that the project or program achieved its purpose or goals? Why or why not?
· What helped or was important for the project or program to achieve its success? If it was not successful, what prevented the project or program from reaching its goals?
· How has this program impacted on …? Please site specific examples.

Outcomes
· What would you say are the main outcomes or benefits of the project or program? Or, in what ways has the community benefited from this project or program?
· Is there anything (positive or negative) that resulted from this project or program that you did not expect?
· Have any related activities been undertaken as a result of this project or program?

Regarding Collaboration
· Who (i.e. agencies or community members, national organizations) participated in this project or program?
· What was their level of involvement? How did they participate?
· Was anyone missing around the table? What types of other organizations would your project or program have benefited involvement from? Why? Were there barriers to this? Please specify.
· Is or was collaboration important to this type of project? Why? How does the project benefit from collaboration?

Appendix B : Focus Group Discussion Guide

Focus groups will be used to obtain in-depth qualitative data from a variety of stakeholders so as to supplement the information from the other data collection methods suggested.

Purpose of the focus groups: Determine the extent to which the stakeholders needs and expectations are being met by the desegregation policy as being undertaken by the *Keillor-Gustafson School Board* district, whether the activities being undertaken and the resultant outcomes are in line with the overall objective of reducing racial segregation in the district and the US. As well the focus groups will be designed to give information on whether the mechanisms being used to deliver the programme are appropriate and effective from the stakeholders perspectives. The selection of the participants will be through stratified sampling to ensure all the information from the focus group is relevant and reliable.

Name of Group facilitator:
Date of Group Session:
Title of the involvement:
Description of participants (numbers, characteristics, type of participants present):

1. Describe, from your perspective the overall objective of the desegregation programme being undertaken by the *Keillor-Gustafson School Board* .
> Probes would include:
> - What does desegregation mean to you. Do you think you need it in the first place?
> - In what ways do you think you are benefiting or contributing?
> - Is the programme meeting your needs as expected?
> - What aspects is the programme including/not including that you like or dislike?
> - What would be your key focus if you were in charge of the desegregation programme

2. Did you have any expectations in being involved in the desegregation programme of the *Keillor-Gustafson School Board*? In what way have you been involved in the activities of this programme?
> Probes would include:
> - How did you come to know about it?
> - Describe the activities that you have been involved in and in what way?
> - Were your roles and level of involvement clear?
> - What was your specific role(s): Is it complete or currently ongoing?
> - Do you think that your involvement is productive and in line with the needs and objectives of the programme?
> - Are there any potential problems you foresee in the activities as undertaken in the past and currently?
> - What would you rather be doing to get to the desired outcome?

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3. What would you define as success in this particular programme?
    Probes would include:
    -   What are the key/specific things that you would want to see happening as a result of desegregation programme
    -   Is there any result that you are happy or unhappy with and why? How visible have these results been in your school and surrounding community?
    -   What corrective measures do you think should be taken to bring it back on track?
4.What other people, agencies or community organizations do you think need to be involved why?
    Probes would include:
    -   What kind of people/organizations do you want to see?
    -   What common or specific characteristics do they have?
    -   What value do you think would add to the desegregation programme/project/
    -   What impact would their participation have on the outcome?
    -   What would be the probability of failure if they are not included and why do you think so?

Appendix C: Survey Examples

The following examples provide an overview of proposed surveys and styles of questions. The surveys will be adapted in response to further information received from key informants.

Teacher surveys:
A survey of the teachers would give insight into the unique problems experienced during the implementation period of the desegregation programs.

Sample questions in this survey might include:
I feel that it is important to actively make sure that all of my students are provided with equal opportunities, regardless of race.
  o completely disagree
  o somewhat disagree
  o neither agree or disagree
  o somewhat agree
  o completely agree

I feel that my coworkers ensure that all students of all races are treated equally and given equal opportunities.
  o completely disagree
  o somewhat disagree
  o neither agree or disagree
  o somewhat agree
  o completely agree

In response to the call for clarification on the effectiveness of the "teach the teacher" methodology, another smaller scale survey would be done to examine the impact of the program. This survey would be designed to identify any positive changes instilled by the currently used two day workshop. It would be randomly distributed to teachers who were taught by teachers who actually attended the two day workshop.

Sample questions in this survey might include:
I found the "teach the teacher" program was a helpful tool for my teaching.
  o completely disagree
  o somewhat disagree
  o neither agree or disagree
  o somewhat agree
  o completely agree

I used the "teach the teacher" program techniques to change how I teach in the classroom.
  o completely disagree
  o somewhat disagree
  o neither agree or disagree
  o somewhat agree

o completely agree

Student surveys:
These surveys would clarify the experiences of the students in the school system and indicate differences in these experiences between different students of different races (Caucasian, African-American, and students of other racial origins.)

Sample questions that may be included in this survey include:

Please rate the following on the scale of 1 to 5:

1) My teachers make me feel included, like I am an important member of the class.
   1 - never   2- rarely   3- sometimes   4- usually   5- always

2) I feel like I am an "outsider" when I am at school.
   1 - never   2- rarely   3- sometimes   4- usually   5- always

Parent surveys:
These surveys would allow us to correlate experiences that children are having at school with their backgrounds.

Sample questions that may be included in this survey include:
Please check the box that is most appropriate:
1) The highest level of education that I have received is:
   o Less than high school
   o High school
   o Vocational training
   o Some college or university
   o College graduate
   o University graduate

2) I feel that students of different races are treated equally at my child's school.
   o completely disagree
   o somewhat disagree
   o neither agree or disagree
   o somewhat agree
   o completely agree

Survey of bus drivers in Bus Drivers Union:
This would provide a clearer picture of what defines the standard "average" frequency of "difficult behaviour" from students taking the bus, and give insight into causes for deviation from this point. These survey results could be supplemented by the quantitative information in the log located with the Director of Transportation.

Sample questions used in this survey may include:

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The number of conflicts I experience due to "difficult behaviour" of students riding on the bus are:
- o rapidly rising
- o slowly rising overall
- o constant
- o slowly declining overall
- o rapidly declining

The majority of conflicts between students are between students of different race.
- o completely disagree
- o somewhat disagree
- o neither agree or disagree
- o somewhat agree
- o completely agree

Busses on currently used bus routes are overcrowded.
- o completely disagree
- o somewhat disagree
- o neither agree or disagree
- o somewhat agree
- o completely agree

As previously mentioned, more detailed surveys will be developed in consultation with the Director of diversity and student services and more detailed information.