

**A HISTORICAL VIEW OF THE MAGNOLIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL
DISTRICT, MAGNOLIA, TEXAS, 1900–2009**

A Dissertation

by

ROBERT MATTHEW CLARK

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2010

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

A Historical View of the Magnolia Independent School District,
Magnolia, Texas, 1900–2009. (August 2010)

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For individuals and organizations, the events of the past shape and affect the decisions made in the present, to the benefit or detriment of the person or group. Historical research can make available information about the past that aids understanding of the future.

This qualitative explanatory historical study of the schools of Magnolia, Texas creates a record of the Magnolia Independent School District by focusing on the political climate, growth patterns, and ethnic influences from 1900 to 2009. The methods of data collection consist of personal interviews, oral histories, school district documents, school board minutes, and newspaper articles.

The research questions that guide the study are: (1) What is the history of Magnolia Public Schools and what influential people and events have shaped the district? (2) What were the causes of growth periods in the Magnolia Independent School District, and what were the effects of such growth? and, (3) How did the district's ethnic and socioeconomic groups affect its growth and instruction?

This explanatory historical study identifies the connection between the development of the schools in Magnolia, Texas and the surrounding community that has grown due to urban expansion. By recording the perceptions of the key people who have witnessed the district's history, noting the influential events that have occurred, and documenting the district's periods of growth, this study will help preserve the history of the schools in Magnolia for current and future leaders and researchers. By assisting with an understanding of the causes of decisions and actions taken in the past, this study has the potential to become an important resource for school administration and staff, community members, and other stakeholders as they seek to positively impact the present and the future.

DEDICATION

To my family

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Often we begin a journey with one destination in mind and yet find ourselves on a path that we did not intend to take—a path more exciting and wonderful than the one intended. I have experienced this during the process of this degree, and in the words of Robert Frost, it has made all the difference.

I would first and foremost like to acknowledge Dr. Lynn M. Burlbaw for his patience and expert guidance and for creating within me a passion for educational history. Without his mentoring and guidance, this research would never have been undertaken. I also wish to thank Dr. Virginia Collier, who believed in and stuck with me through several changes in my path. I thank Dr. Janet Hammer and Dr. Jack Helfeldt, without whose guidance to view the research through a different lens, this project could not have been completed. I thank my editor, Thom Lemmons, who made sure I dotted all the “i’s” and crossed the “t’s.”

Celeste Graves, who is a constant inspiration to all that come in contact with her, also has my gratitude; her dedication to the community is indescribable.

I would like to thank my parents, R. Denny Clark, Connie Dabney, and Dr. Roy and Marjanne Gillick, for their constant support, love, and encouragement. I would also like to thank Ed and Gloria Brown for their encouragement. I am grateful to my children, Jonathan, Rebekah, and Joshua, for understanding when I could not be there and for making me do my homework. And most of all, I thank my wife, Gina Clark, who so many times kept me accountable, encouraged me, and continued to love me through it all.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

How do school districts cope with changes in population? When sociological and political events demand a shift in education policy, how do school districts manage? What causes population shifts that create increased demands on school facilities and resources, and how do school districts deal with these changing responsibilities?

For answers to the above questions, historical data are often a primary resource. And yet, for many school districts that have had or will in the future have to develop solutions to these and other similar problems, little historical data exists in a form that allows it to be efficiently consulted for guidance. This study seeks to begin the establishment and creation of such a historical record for a school district in Texas that has undergone the types of changes outlined above.

Statement of Problem

The Magnolia, Texas Independent School District had its beginnings in the late nineteenth century with the establishment of three small rural schools in what was then known as the Mink community, approximately 45 miles northwest of Houston (MISD, 2008). Since that time, sweeping changes in both population and social and educational policy have brought about major shifts that have had to be accommodated by school officials, teachers, and members of the community.

This dissertation follows the style of the *American Educational Research Journal*.

However, little previous research exists that focuses primarily on the Magnolia public schools' growth, ethnicity, and curriculum changes. The research of Byrne (1932), the Montgomery County Genealogical Society (1981), and Etheridge (1999) present the history of segregation, desegregation, and education of school children in Montgomery County; however, there is no specific research on the schools in Magnolia, Texas or southern Montgomery County. Research conducted by Graves (2004) provides a brief overview of the schools of Magnolia; however, the research focus is the history of the town of Magnolia and surrounding areas, not the schools or educational procedures and policy of Magnolia, Texas. Many school systems similar to those in Magnolia have functioned as the social and cultural center of the communities that exist on the outskirts of large cities. With the rapid encroachment of the urban landscape, farms and ranches quickly become subdivisions and shopping centers. As small suburban towns are annexed by larger, neighboring towns, the schools are incorporated into the larger school system and their history is often lost. With the disappearance of the school system, the unique characteristics of these communities are often lost. Because there is no history of Magnolia Independent School District, current residents are unaware of the rich legacy of the district and how the district has contributed and continues to contribute to the quality of life in Magnolia. Further, those responsible for providing future leadership for the schools do not have access to important historical data that could otherwise inform and guide future decisions.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this explanatory historical study is the creation of a historical record for the Magnolia Independent School District, focusing on growth and the ethnic, socioeconomic, and instructional/curricular changes that have occurred over the last one hundred years. This record will be created by preserving in written form the school district's history as currently available by means of recording oral histories, performing document searches, and interviews.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the history of Magnolia Independent School District, and what influential people and events have shaped the district?
2. What were the causes of growth periods in the Magnolia Independent School District, and what were the effects of such growth?
3. How did the district's ethnic and socioeconomic groups affect its growth?

Historical Background

Mink, Texas was originally settled in the 1880s because of the railroad that served the numerous sawmills in the area 45 miles northwest of Houston and 16 miles north of what is now Tomball, Texas. Because it was used heavily to transport lumber from the sawmills to Houston, the railroad connecting Mink to Houston began facilitating the growth of the community by providing an effective mode for goods and people to travel into the area. Before long, the little town began to flourish.

As a result of the industry and financial resources brought to the community by the sawmills and the railroad, the small community of Mink expanded to include a post office, a general store, and a physician's office by 1890. T. H. Yon brought the mail to the post office daily on horseback from Plantersville, a 10-mile commute; the Dean family, who owned one of the many sawmills, built a general store across from the railroad depot; and the first bank in town was constructed beside the store (Montgomery County Genealogical Society, 1981). Soon after, thanks to the commerce from the sawmills and railroad, several other buildings were built. The earliest schools in the community of Mink, by this time referred to as Magnolia, were established in 1893 (MISD, 2008). Classes began meeting in a Methodist church, a Baptist church, and in the Grange building in Mink. These three schools, aptly named the "Methodist school," the "Baptist school," and the "Grange School," were consolidated a few years later (Graves, 2004, p. 145).

By the early 1900s, the local area schools consolidated to create the Magnolia Common School District #6; the graduating class of 1912 consisted of six students (MISD, 2008). In the early 1930s, with one school building, a total enrollment of 150 students, six teachers, and nine grade levels of instruction, the three-member school

board decided that it was time to build a proper school house (Graves, 2004, p. 146). The new campus construction began in 1935 and was completed in time for the White high school students to begin school during the 1936–1937 academic year. In 1939, land was purchased to build a new school (referred to at the time as a “Negro school”) that would serve African American students from the first through the seventh grades.

Both schools operated as a part of Magnolia Common District #6 and remained as part of the district in 1950 when Magnolia became an independent school district (MISD, 1950). In 1968, the two schools were integrated smoothly when the Negro school became the junior high school (O. Ross, 2009). Magnolia ISD consisted of these two campuses until the 1970s when population growth forced the district to begin expanding facilities in order to accommodate increasing numbers of students.

There has been much growth over the last 100 years in the town of Magnolia and the school district. Throughout the history of Magnolia ISD, there have been many challenges to adapt to changes mandated by political, curricular, and physical circumstances and requirements in order to continue meeting the needs of the rapidly growing community.

According to the City of Magnolia:

The City of Magnolia is located at the junction of farm roads 1774 and 1488, approximately 45 miles northwest of Houston and 25 miles southwest of Conroe. We are approximately 20 miles from both IH45 and US290, two of Houston's main highway systems. The city limit population is small, however; the greater Magnolia area spans approximately 12 miles in all directions with an estimated population of more than 65,000 (City of Magnolia, 2009).

Covering 147 square miles, the Magnolia Independent School District comprised eight elementary, two 6th grade, two junior high, two high school, and two alternative school campuses during the 2008–2009 school year. The student demographics were 75% White, 21% Hispanic, 3% African American, and 1% other.

The student population consists of 35% Economically Disadvantaged and 11% Limited English Proficient students (MISD, 2008). This drastic change in demographics—when compared to the beginning days of the schools in Magnolia, when the student population consisted primarily of the children of White laborers in the sawmills—has, during the years in which it developed, repeatedly called for changes in the curriculum and instructional methods of the district in order to continue to meet the needs of all students.

Several documented surges of student enrollment can be observed in the district's history. For example; since the 1998–1999 academic year, the Magnolia Independent School District has had an 85% growth in student enrollment. (from 6,111 students enrolled in 1998–1999 to 11,301 students enrolled for the 2008–2009 school year; MISD, 2008).

Summary

This chapter provides the introduction to the purpose of this research through the historical study of Magnolia schools. The research questions that guide this study are stated and the limitations are discussed. Chapter II presents published studies conducted by other researchers focused on similar school districts in Texas and the community history of Magnolia, Texas. This chapter further presents the void of research on the schools of Magnolia and the significance of this research, which has been undertaken to inform and archive the history of the schools. Chapter III details the rationale for the site selection and methodology, and lists the research questions. This chapter further presents the research design, study limitations and delimitations, and available sources of information to answer the research questions. Chapters IV, V, and VI record the historical data of the Magnolia schools through the use of oral histories, personal interviews, school documents, TEA documents, and newspaper articles. Chapter VII summarizes and presents the findings of the research and poses questions for further inquiry.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Previous Research

The previous research that is the benchmark for this study can be classified in one of two categories: research conducted and published using other school districts, and research published on the community of Magnolia.

The published research that shares the majority of its characteristics with Magnolia schools is the study conducted by Sullivan from Southern Illinois University (1988). This research describes the effects of rapid growth within the Cypress-Fairbanks (Texas) Independent School District over a period of 100 years. In this historical chronological narrative, Sullivan describes and documents the development of this school district as it rapidly expands to meet the needs of urban growth; the study focuses on the effects of rapid urban growth on a school system. Sharing similar characteristics to the Magnolia and Cypress-Fairbanks schools, Fort Bend Independent School District was the subject of a study conducted by Emerson (2004) in which the researcher presents a historical narrative of the Fort Bend Independent School District from 1820 to 2002. This published research presents the history of the school system of Fort Bend with a primary focus on the early years of the community. Emerson's study clearly documents the effects of rapid growth and its effects on the schools in the Fort Bend community as they adapt to meet its demands.

Other similar published studies include Harrison's 2005 research on the Kyle, Texas schools. This historical study documents the period from the inception of the Kyle school system in 1911 to its consolidation with Hayes Independent School District in 1967. Harrison reviews the history of the Kyle schools prior to the consolidation and discusses various aspects of the schools' development and change during the period studied. Farney (2007) published a study on the schools of Georgetown, Texas from 1850 to 1966 that documents the growth of the district from a single school to numerous campuses during the 116 years examined.

Masters (1993), Lowrance (1993), and Harrell (1995) each published historical research on selected schools in Texas. While Masters, Lowrance, and Harrell are similar to this study, it cannot be considered comparable, due to the small size of the districts in comparison to Magnolia, Cypress-Fairbanks, and Fort Bend.

There are several publications on the history of Magnolia, Texas, and Montgomery County which detail the communities within this area. Research by Graves (2004) is the only published work that focuses specifically on the community history of the Magnolia area. The Montgomery County Genealogical Society (1981) published a manuscript detailing the history of Montgomery County in which several communities, including Magnolia, are presented. Within this publication, however, all schools within the county are mentioned except the schools in Magnolia. Etheridge (1999) self-published a study detailing the history of the Conroe, Texas schools, but fails to mention other surrounding schools (such as Magnolia). Granger (1972) published a historical overview limited to the history of the Magnolia high school football program from 1941 to 1970, focusing on statistics of wins and losses and containing brief

statements from past coaches. This document, while informative on the history of football in the district, gives little data on other important school district events during the period.

Two works of research, both limited in scope and rather dated, provide brief snapshots of the schools in the area during the late 1930s and early 1940s. A published thesis by Blackman (1941) discusses the reorganization of the schools in Montgomery County during the period 1939–1940. While informative, this research gives statistical data only and focuses on a single academic year. In the same year, Jordan (1941) published a thesis regarding the financial condition of the schools in Grimes and Montgomery counties. This document provides fiscal data only, presented as a comparison of the Common and Independent school districts for the 1939–1940 school year.

A published dissertation by Byrne (1932) comparing the White and Negro schools of Montgomery County presents a comparison of all schools within the county in 1926. This study includes the schools in Magnolia, both White and Negro, as compared to all other schools within the Montgomery County boundaries.

What Is Missing

As shown by the above survey of research, the investigator looking for in-depth historical information on the schools of Magnolia, Texas encounters a limited quantity of published materials. The published narrative of Graves (2004) devotes a chapter to the schools of Magnolia, and while these data are informative, they do not contain details of growth, curriculum, nor sociopolitical influences upon the schools. Graves's publication is inclusive of Magnolia community history as a whole, not specifically

focusing on the schools. Etheridge (1999) limits the historical narrative to the schools in Conroe. The Montgomery County Genealogical Society (1981) publication discusses the growth of several schools in Montgomery County. Perplexingly, this study presents all schools within the geographical boundaries of the county except those in Magnolia, with no explanation given for this omission. The published study by Byrne (1932), while significantly older than the others, does include the schools of Magnolia in its comparison of White and Negro schools in Montgomery County in 1926. However, all these existing studies are of limited use for providing in-depth historical information specifically about the schools in the Magnolia community.

Significance

With no published research on the schools in Magnolia, there is a void in the available historical documentation. This study seeks to fill this void by documenting the historical events that demonstrate and illuminate the connections between the urban expansion of the Magnolia community and the development of the schools. What is the history of the schools in Magnolia? How did that history influence the schools that exist today? What were the effects of the community's urban growth on the schools? Who were the key individuals involved in the schools and the community during these changes, and what influence did these leaders have on the schools? Local history, specific influential persons, and urban growth set in motion past events that would eventually bring about the present situation in the schools in Magnolia. These influences need to be known by school administration, students, and the community so that lessons of the past will be available to guide future decisions.

Summary

Several historical studies have been published presenting the growth of schools and school districts. Two publications mentioned above are most comparable in the size and characteristics of the school district to Magnolia schools. The remaining three, while demonstrating significant research, focus on districts of less comparable size and historical similarity to Magnolia. Further research has uncovered a single published document presenting the history of the Magnolia schools in an overview format; an additional document mentioned no more than the existence of schools in Magnolia. There exists no published in-depth historical research on Magnolia schools. Though several research publications treat the history of Magnolia and the surrounding area, Montgomery County, and neighboring school districts, no study is available that presents detailed historical information focused on the development of the schools of Magnolia Independent School District. This study will fill the void of historical research on the existence and growth of Magnolia school.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Site Selection

The Magnolia Independent School District is located 45 miles northwest of Houston, Texas. The district covers 147 square miles and during the 2008–2009 school year had eight elementary, two 6th grade, two junior high, two high schools, and two alternative school campuses, serving 11,300 students. During this same period, the district's student demographics were 75% White, 21% Hispanic, 3% African American, and 1% other. The student population was classified as 35% Economically Disadvantaged and 11% as Limited English Proficient (MISD, 2008).

This site was chosen due to the growth of the district, the changes in demographics, and the rapid encroachment of the urban community. For example, by comparison with the above population numbers and demographics that reflect the schools in 2008, at their inception less than 100 years ago, the three schools of the Magnolia community taught all grades in single-room settings.

In addition to changes within the district, the researcher has resided and been employed for ten years in various administrative positions within the Magnolia Independent School District. Therefore, a trusting relationship has been developed over time with the staff, students, and community members. Individuals within the

community and schools are familiar with the researcher and the information being sought which allows for more data readily shared with when compared to a researcher without the relationships. Additionally, the researcher was able to take advantage of relatively easy access to district records and archives pertinent to this study.

Methodology

Historical research provides information that will assist others in understanding and planning for the future by studying the past. This study is an explanatory history study of the schools of Magnolia, Texas. Thomas describes this method of research by stating, “In an explanatory history, the author is especially interested in the causes of events” (2003, p. 20). This method differs from chronicle histories and evaluative histories by its intention to aid understanding of what has caused the events being studied. Unlike chronicle histories, the explanatory history goes beyond merely recording a narration of the events. On the other hand, unlike evaluative histories, the explanatory method stops short of making judgments about the events recorded (Thomas, 2003). This study will examine and record the history, events, and causes of events of Magnolia schools in order to understand the causal relationships of important events and developments in the district.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the history of Magnolia Independent School District, and what influential people and events have shaped the district?
2. What were the causes of growth periods in the Magnolia Independent School District, and what were the effects of such growth?
3. How did the district's ethnic and socioeconomic groups affect its growth?

The researcher believes that these questions accord well with the aims of this explanatory historical study: to determine the causal relationships among the important events, persons, and developments in the Magnolia Independent School District.

Data Collection

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Magnolia Independent School District superintendent (Appendix A: MISD Authorization for Study). To answer the research questions, data was collected in three modes: oral histories, existing documentation, and newspaper articles.

Oral Histories

The most valuable data were collected from four oral histories, each over 90 minutes in duration, conducted with persons identified as influential in the history of the school district. "Oral history collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews" (Richie, 2003, p.13). Due to the shelf life of

compact disks, video tapes, and other temporary methods of recording oral histories, the use of digital recording is recommended for proper long term archiving (Baylor, 2009). This study utilizes digital archiving of oral histories of such individuals as past students, past and present administrators, school board members representing each decade beginning in 1950, school and superintendent's secretaries since 1940, and teachers from both the White and Negro schools.

While there are no individuals still living who could tell of the earliest schools in the community, there were three individuals who were in school during the 1930s. These interviewees—Celeste Graves, Ole Mae Fulton, and Cedric Smith—were students during the early 1930s; Graves and Fulton later were employed and subsequently retired from the Magnolia Independent School District, while Smith served two different terms as a member of the district's board of trustees. Given these three subjects' long experience in the district as residents, students, district employees, and, in the case of Smith, a longtime school board member and community leader, the richness of the data they provided about the last seventy years of district history was very important in the process of constructing this explanatory study.

Celeste Graves was a student, teacher, and later the superintendent's secretary. She continues to work part-time as of the date of this research (Graves, 2009). Ole Mae Fulton was a student at the Negro school during the early 1930s, completed school in

Magnolia, graduated from Tuskegee University, and returned to her hometown to teach at the school from which she graduated (Fulton, 2009). Both women are in their early 90s and clearly recall times, dates, and events. Further, the interviews with Graves and Fulton are triangulated with board minutes, school documents, and newspaper articles. The interviews were conducted and recorded over a span of several months (see Appendix B: MISD Oral History Participant's Consent, Appendix C: Sample MISD Oral History Questions).

Documentation and Newspaper Articles

Some existing documentation in the form of student transcripts, Texas Education Agency reports, school district financial data, graduation information, newsletters, and PTO/PTA records was discovered by searching in attics, storage crates, aged trailers, and other makeshift storage facilities in or near the Magnolia community. Over eighteen square feet of such data was retrieved and reviewed. School Board minutes from 1950 to 2009, totaling approximately twenty five linear feet of documents, were reviewed. Twenty-three rolls of microfiche, representing archived newspaper articles from local papers, were reviewed and included in this study. These newspapers include the *Houston Chronicle*, the *Conroe Courier*, the *Tomball Sun*, and the *Potpourri*.

Study Limitations

Only a few of the individuals responsible for the governance and operation of the district over the past 100 years are still alive. For those who have passed on, their memories and motivation can be deduced only by reading the few documents that still exist. Further, the amount of archival data for the school district is limited because school districts, as a rule, have more materials to store than they have storage space. Thus, when space requirements become critical, documents and records that seem of little immediate value are often disposed of. This has been true in Magnolia, where few documents have been retained more than seven years. Thus, this dissertation will rely heavily on oral histories collected from the older citizens of the community, in addition to district records, newspapers reports, and the few official documents from previous years that are still available.

CHAPTER IV

MAGNOLIA SCHOOLS: EARLY YEARS, 1900 - 1950

Introduction

As in much of a United States that was still largely agricultural and rural, the schools in the Magnolia, Texas community (originally known by the name of Mink) began in the late nineteenth century as simple, one- or two-room rural schoolhouses built to educate the children of families within walking distance. Because of the plentiful forests in the area, useful for supplying the construction needs of the growing city of Houston, just over 40 miles distant, the railroad serving the area was a busy transportation asset, facilitating the movement of goods and people in and out of the area.

Over time, convenient transportation and desirable natural resources would continue to encourage the growth of the small community, which directly impacted the population of school-age children in the area. By 1900, area community leaders recognized the necessity of consolidating the several small schools into a single school.

The School Adequacy Survey conducted by the State of Texas in 1937 impelled many smaller districts, including the schools in Magnolia, to consolidate with others to create larger, more efficient districts (Texas Board of Education, 1937). In Magnolia, this consolidation occasioned the formation of Montgomery County Common School District #6. Typical for the time, Magnolia schools were segregated by race, and both the White and Black schools were reviewed for the adequacy of their resources and facilities.

As the school district continued to grow, so did the demand for opportunities for students to engage in sports and other extracurricular activities. Often, these activities were facilitated or sponsored by the school superintendent, a teacher, or a bus driver.

In 1950, the Montgomery County Common School District #6 became the Magnolia Independent School District. This change allowed the community's schools to be under local control, rather than being part of the county school system. Local control of educational activities and facilities would continue to be an important theme throughout the district's history, though the community often differed sharply with the superintendent over the direction the schools should take.

Early History of Magnolia Schools

In 1886, when what would become known as Magnolia, Texas was still commonly referred to as the Mink community, brothers W. S. and A. E. Proctor donated an acre of land to the Methodist Church. In 1887, J. C. Turner donated one acre of land just south of the Proctor brothers' tract for a Grange building. This building was also used for church services and civic functions. Two years later, in March 1889, Mr. and Mrs. J. L. Turner donated one acre of land for a Baptist church. Each of these sites was used as a school; they operated independently of each other. The fourth school, the Steger School, came into existence due to the dissatisfaction of several parents with the Baptist School. These individuals organized their own school, using either a vacant home or a parent's home that was available (*Magnolian*, 1957). These four schools, aptly named the "Methodist school," the "Grange School," the "Baptist school," and the "Steger School," were consolidated in 1893 using the name of the Grange School (*Magnolian*, 1957).

As a part of the movement toward greater organization in Texas schools, many small rural schools became part of county common school systems; the schools of the Magnolia community were no exception. By the early 1900s, the local area schools consolidated to create Montgomery County Common School District #6. The new school had a graduating class of six students in 1912 (MISD, 2008). The Montgomery County Common School District #6 was the predecessor organization of the Magnolia Independent School District.

A new building was completed on December 29, 1911 and opened the doors to the students on January 1, 1912 ("New School in Magnolia," 1912). The new building consisted of four rooms and was located on what is presently Old Hockley Road, north of FM 1488. The school building caught fire in September 1926 and was rebuilt on the same site in 1927. The school was painted light gray and contained five classrooms, a kitchen, and an auditorium area (Graves 2004, p. 145; also see Appendix F: Historical Photographs of Magnolia School Buildings).

One of the teachers who began teaching in the new school in 1912 was Mattie Williams, later to be Martha W. Gayle or Mrs. W. J. Gayle when she married W. J. Gayle after his first wife died. Martha and W. J. had a daughter named Celeste Gayle, later known as Celeste Graves, who would go on to teach and become the secretary for the superintendent of schools, a position she would hold for 57 years.

In 1921, the Montgomery County Common School District #6 board members were T. H. Yon, T. R. Dean, and M. B. Snow. Enrollment for that year was 113 students (Gayle, 1957). Tom R. Ellisor served as the principal of the school in addition to

teaching classes. There were a total of six teachers in 1927: T. R. Ellisor, Willie Mae Ellisor (Mrs. T. R. Ellisor), Mallie Venn “Bace” Steger, Hough M. Rooks, and Hazel Cisco.

1927–1950: Consolidation and Growth

The school board at this time consisted of G. R. Grisham, president, A. K. Stewart, county superintendent, and Tom R. Ellisor, who had been promoted from being principal and teacher to serving as superintendent of schools for Montgomery County Common School District #6. Ellisor, who graduated from what was then known as Sam Houston State Teacher’s College with a bachelor’s degree in physical education and a minor in industrial arts (Granger, 1972), would continue to serve in the leadership of the Magnolia schools—as they were known, beginning in 1893—for over two decades.

During the decade from 1930 to 1940, the Magnolia schools reached an enrollment peak of 250 students. While the overall trend in enrollment steadily increased during this time, enrollment decreased in 1940 due to many of the community’s young men enlisting in the armed services (see Figure 1). By the early 1930s, with the district having one school building, a total enrollment between 150 and 250 students, six teachers, and nine grade levels of instruction, the Montgomery County Common School District #6 board of trustees knew that it was time to build more accommodating facilities (Graves 2004, p. 146). The new campus construction began in 1935 and was completed in time for the high school students to occupy their new building during the 1936–1937 school year (see Appendix F: Historical Photographs of Magnolia School Buildings).

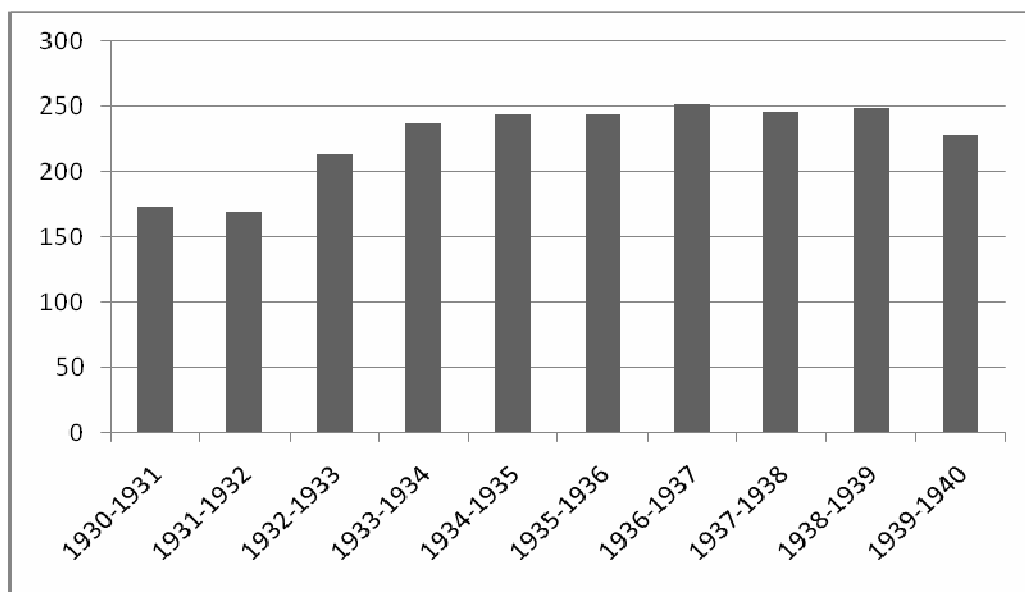


Figure 1: Enrollment in Montgomery County School District #6, 1930–1940

(Source: Blackman, 1941).

The students and community were very proud of the new brick structure, and the luxury of having a classroom for each grade level caused a great deal of excitement (Graves, personal communication, February 2008). During the same year, the old school building was moved to the site of the new building to serve as a cafeteria and a shop for teaching vocational skills, a course of study referred to today as Career and Technology Education classes. A teacher’s residence, or “teacherage,” built by the shop class students and their teacher with the help of the teacher’s young daughter, was also moved to the site in 1932. The teacherage was constructed at the request of the superintendent, Tom Ellisor for his personal residence (Graves, personal communication, February 2008).

In 1938, a gymnasium and auditorium were constructed on the site at a cost of \$16,792 (Graves 2004, p. 148). This new addition allowed the students to hold volleyball and basketball team competitions in the new gym, a fact of which the students were very proud. Graves states that the girls' volleyball team won first place at the county meet in 1940, the first year for the students to compete in the meet rather than merely playing on the school's clay courts during recess. These early facilities encouraged the beginning of Magnolia students' involvement in athletic competitions during the following years.

The new addition was needed for the growth of the school, due in part to acquisition of more students because of consolidation among the schools of Montgomery County. In 1937, the Texas State Board of Education sponsored an adequacy survey that was carried out by the federal Works Progress Administration. In that survey, the purpose of which was to evaluate the advisability of consolidating districts as needed to promote the best use of funding, the facilities in Magnolia were found to be "adequate" as compared to those of Conroe, Splendora, Montgomery, and Fostoria, each of which would need new buildings due to the consolidations (Texas State Board of Education 1937, pp. 1006–1017). Subsequently, the Decker Prairie School, a few miles south of the Magnolia community, was closed and the area previously served by Decker Prairie School was divided in half; the north side became part of Common District #6 (Magnolia) and the southern section would be served by the Tomball schools in Harris County. (Blackman, 1941; also see Appendices D: Area/Distances of School Districts in Montgomery County, Texas, 1941 and E: Map of School Districts in Montgomery County, Texas, 1941).

Blackman (1941) describes the teacher-pupil ratio in the Magnolia schools in 1940 as follows:

Magnolia has an exceptionally high percentage of teachers doing high school work. Forty-five and four-tenths per cent of the teachers are in the high school, while the high school enrollment is only 29.6 per cent of the pupils of the school. The teacher-pupil ratio of Magnolia high school is 14.6, which is rather low as compared with that of the other districts (p. 24).

Blackman further states, “Four of the districts, Magnolia, New Caney, Oklahoma, and Security, have better than 90 per cent of their scholastics enrolled in school” (p. 41).

The salaries of White teachers who taught in the common school districts in Montgomery County at that time averaged \$1,021 annually (Jordan, 1941).

Segregation and the Magnolia Schools

Compared with the average pay for White teachers, the salaries of African American teachers (sometimes referred to in the historical sources as “colored”) who taught in the common school districts in Montgomery County at that time averaged \$557 annually (Jordan, 1941).

In accordance with the usual practice of the time in the region, use of the building constructed in 1935–36 was limited to White high school students; the Black high school students went to the town of Montgomery for schooling. In 1939, to meet the needs of the growing Black population, land was purchased and a building constructed for a new Negro school that would serve Black students from elementary school through the seventh grade (see Figure 2).

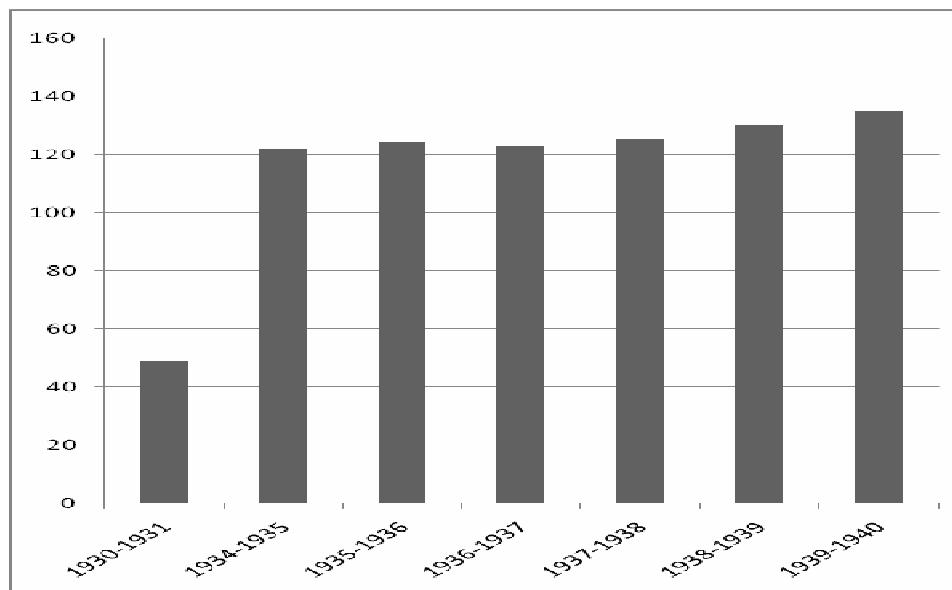


Figure 2: Enrollment in Negro school, 1930–1940 (source: Blackman, 1941).

Previously, younger Black students attended classes at two schools, located at Magnolia Mill and Magnolia, with a student population of 41 and 46, respectively. There was one teacher per school. After consolidation of these two schools into the new Negro school in Magnolia, the Black school population was 87 with a staff of two teachers (Texas State Board of Education 1937, pp.1008, 1014). This campus, named George W. Carver School, was located on Magnolia-Conroe Road, which is currently Buddy Riley Road. In marked contrast to the new campus in Magnolia, this campus consisted of only four classrooms when it opened. The older Black students continued to attend high school in the neighboring town of Montgomery and were bussed to school each day from the George W. Carver campus. Ola Mae Fulton was a student at

the Black school then and later became a teacher after attending Tuskegee University and returning to Magnolia in 1951. Her beginning salary was \$2,400 annually (Fulton, 2009).

Expanding Activities, Growth through Consolidation

The White high school published its first yearbook, *The Magnolian*, in 1941; that volume continues to be proudly displayed in the campus principal's office today. Also in 1941, Tom Ellisor, the superintendent of schools, volunteered to coach a sports team in addition to teaching classes and providing leadership for the school district. He and the students formed the first six-man football team for the school that same year (*Magnolian*, 1942). Ellisor coached the team for two years before retiring from coaching with a 10-1-1 record. There was no football in Magnolia in 1943 due to the war; many of the coaches and young men entered the armed forces (Granger, 1972). This constituted "the football team" until the last six-man game that was played in 1946, after which the district formed its first 11-man team (*Magnolian*, 1946). In an interview Tom Ellisor stated that the school in Magnolia joined the University Scholastic League in 1946 (Granger, 1972). During that time, students could also participate in 4-H clubs, first organized in 1943 (Graves 2004, p. 148).

The Oklahoma community, east of Magnolia, had a school that taught students up to the seventh grade. After seventh grade, these students were transferred to Tomball schools. In 1944, this school was consolidated into the Magnolia Common School District (O. Ross, 2009). This additional influx of students began to be felt in the classroom as the number of students again increased in Magnolia.

In 1947, Magnolia Common School District #6 approved its first bond election, to fund construction of a new school on the same campus occupied by the old high school, teacherage, shop, cafeteria, new gym, and auditorium (Graves 2004, p. 148). After completion of the new structure a few years later, the older structure that had housed the high school from 1937 to 1949 became the elementary campus and the new structure that began construction in 1947 became the junior high and high school (*Magnolian*, 1950). The new high school building was placed parallel to the street, in line with the old high school structure, giving both campuses direct street frontage and entrances (see Appendix F: Historical Photographs of Magnolia School Buildings).

At this time, Tom R. Ellisor still served as superintendent of schools with a board of trustees consisting of W. C. Brautigam, president of the board, Fred Brantley, and George Ross. The building committee for the new school consisted of T. A. McWhorter, W. J. Gayle, L. A. Buckalew, W. W. Goodson, and Rux Winslow (Graves, 2004, p. 148).

Beginning of Magnolia Independent School District

On March 20, 1950, The Montgomery County Common School District #6 officially became the Magnolia Independent School District, following approval of the measure by the community's voters on March 11 ("Magnolia schools made independent," 1950). Present at the meeting that officially approved this change were W. C. Brautigam, Cecil Groves, G. W. Ross, L. A. Buckalew, W. A. Dean, Tom Abney, and Ed Chandler. The county superintendent, Joe A. Smith, was also in attendance (MISD, March 20, 1950, p.1). Organization as an independent district placed greater

control of school policy and administration in the hands of the local Magnolia community, rather than remaining as part of the greater county school system. Community leaders saw this change as highly advantageous.

Additionally, community leaders believed that organizing as an independent district would allow for more opportunities to receive state funding that could benefit the instructional program of the schools. The recently passed Gilmer-Aiken legislation of 1949, with its Foundation School Program, was designed to aid smaller, rural districts in achieving educational excellence and the researcher believes that community leaders may have been eager to take advantage of these new opportunities.

On March 28, 1950, the following individuals were elected to serve as the first board of trustees for the Magnolia Independent School District: W. C. Brautigam, president; L. A. Buckalew, secretary; Cecil Groves; A. E. Lloyd; G. W. Ross; Cedric Smith; and O. S. Smith (MISD, April 3, 1950; see Appendix G: School Board Trustees of Magnolia Independent School District). Cedric Smith would go on to play an integral role in the long term development of the district, serving on the school board from 1950 to 1955 and again from 1987 to 1997. Smith also served as Magnolia's first mayor and would eventually have a campus named in his honor.

During the regularly scheduled board meeting of June 27, 1950, the MISD trustees moved for and approved, in a four-to-three vote, the hiring of Tom R. Ellisor as tax assessor and collector and L. J. Boyd as superintendent of schools, each for a period of one year (MISD, June 27, 1950; see Appendix H: Superintendents of Magnolia Independent School District), thus officially hiring the first MISD superintendent of schools and tax assessor/collector, and also bringing to an end the tenure as

superintendent of Tom R. Ellisor, who had guided Magnolia Common School District #6 from the second decade of its existence, through a period of frequent consolidation, to its current state of growth.

Summary

As Magnolia grew in the early 1900s, the rural schools of what had been known as the Mink community consolidated, creating a single school in the town of Magnolia. In the 1920s, due to the statewide move toward consolidation and efficiency, the school became the Montgomery County Common School District #6, part of the county school system. As the community continued to grow and prosper, community leaders sought the advantages of greater control over local schools, leading to the formation of the Magnolia Independent School District in 1950. By this date, the schools consisted of a new Black campus, a White elementary and high school, a gymnasium, a library, and several buildings to accommodate various extracurricular activities. The students were active in interscholastic athletic competitions in the area.

As the 1950s unfolded, the trends of growth driven by ease of transportation and the proximity of the burgeoning city of Houston continued to propel growth in the population of the Magnolia community and surrounding areas. Educational and community leaders would face the need for more physical facilities to house the growing student population. In addition, the longstanding practice of segregated education would come under greater and greater scrutiny by the federal government, a social change that would have direct impact on the Magnolia schools.

CHAPTER V
STEADY GROWTH, CHANGING TIMES, AND THE BEGINNINGS OF
URBANIZATION, 1950–1980

Introduction

From 1950 to 1980, Magnolia Independent School District experienced several changes that affected the district’s campus structure, curriculum, and leadership. The steady development of transportation in the area—especially the construction of roads facilitating convenient travel to and from Houston—encouraged many persons to settle in the area, fostering steady growth in the district’s student population. Due to the growth of Houston, Texas, the improved highways, and the resulting development of large, master-planned communities in proximity to the district, the schools in Magnolia Independent School District began to feel an increasing need for expanded facilities and a broadening in the scope of curriculum. In many ways, the developments during this period are emblematic and precursory to many changes that would continue to shape the district.

Early Years for the Magnolia Independent School District

The students enrolled in the 1950–1951 academic year would be the first to be in the Magnolia Independent School District (MISD) rather than in the Montgomery County Common School District #6. The community was pleased with its new status as an independent school district. According to the *Conroe Courier*, “Larry J. Boyd has been hired by the board and has taken over his [Ellisor’s] duties. Supt. Boyd comes to Magnolia from the East and Mount Houston school district. Boyd expects an increase in

enrollment this year of approximately 5%” (“New Magnolia School District,” 1950). Enrollment in MISD during the 1950-1951 school year was 343 White and 89 Black, totaling 432 students (Graves, 2004). During the first year of the Magnolia Independent School District, the board of trustees took several proactive measures that would affect the operation of MISD in the future.

The first action of the MISD school board, other than to organize and elect officers, was the decision to build a new Negro school (MISD Minutes, June 27, 1950). During its first year, the school board also sold for \$1 the school bus originally assigned to transport students of the Negro school and replaced it with a newly purchased one, continued to transfer all the Negro high school students to the neighboring town of Montgomery, completed the construction of what it deemed a more suitable Negro school for the lower-grade students at a cost of \$9,250, and adopted the Course of Study for Elementary Science recommended by the state department of education.

MISD borrowed funds to cover its expenses during its first year and repaid the entire amount in the same year. This secondary action would prove to be indicative of the financial conservatism that would characterize the district in years to come. The first tax rate was set at \$1.18 per hundred dollars of valuation, which was lower than the previous set by the county school district.

At the May 1951 board meeting, Cedric Smith made the motion to rehire Superintendent Boyd for the following year, and this was seconded by O. S. Smith. However, the motion was voted down 5 to 2 (MISD Minutes, May 24, 1951) and, a month later hired Jack McIntosh as the new superintendent for the district (MISD Minutes, July 10, 1950). The board had previously renewed Tom Ellisor’s contract to

serve as tax assessor and collector for the year in a 5–2 vote but this was Ellisor's last service to the district as a year later in the July 3rd board meeting of 1952, the school board decided not to renew Ellisor's contract as school tax assessor and collector (MISD Minutes, July 3, 1952). Ellisor subsequently moved to Van Vleck, Texas, where he served as superintendent for twelve years before eventually retiring in New Waverly, Texas (Granger, 1972).

July 1, 1951– June 30, 1958: Expanding Facilities and Continuing Segregation

One of McIntosh's early decisions was to hire Celeste Graves as a secretary in January of 1952 (Graves, 2009). Graves would continue to serve in this capacity full time, retire, and return part time at the time this study was conducted.

Enrollment during the period from 1951 to 1958 was characterized by moderate growth, as noted in Figure 3. In 1951 the total enrollment of MISD was 431, comprised of 343 White students and 88 Black students. The same year, the teaching staff consisted of eleven teachers at the White school and four teachers at the Negro campus.

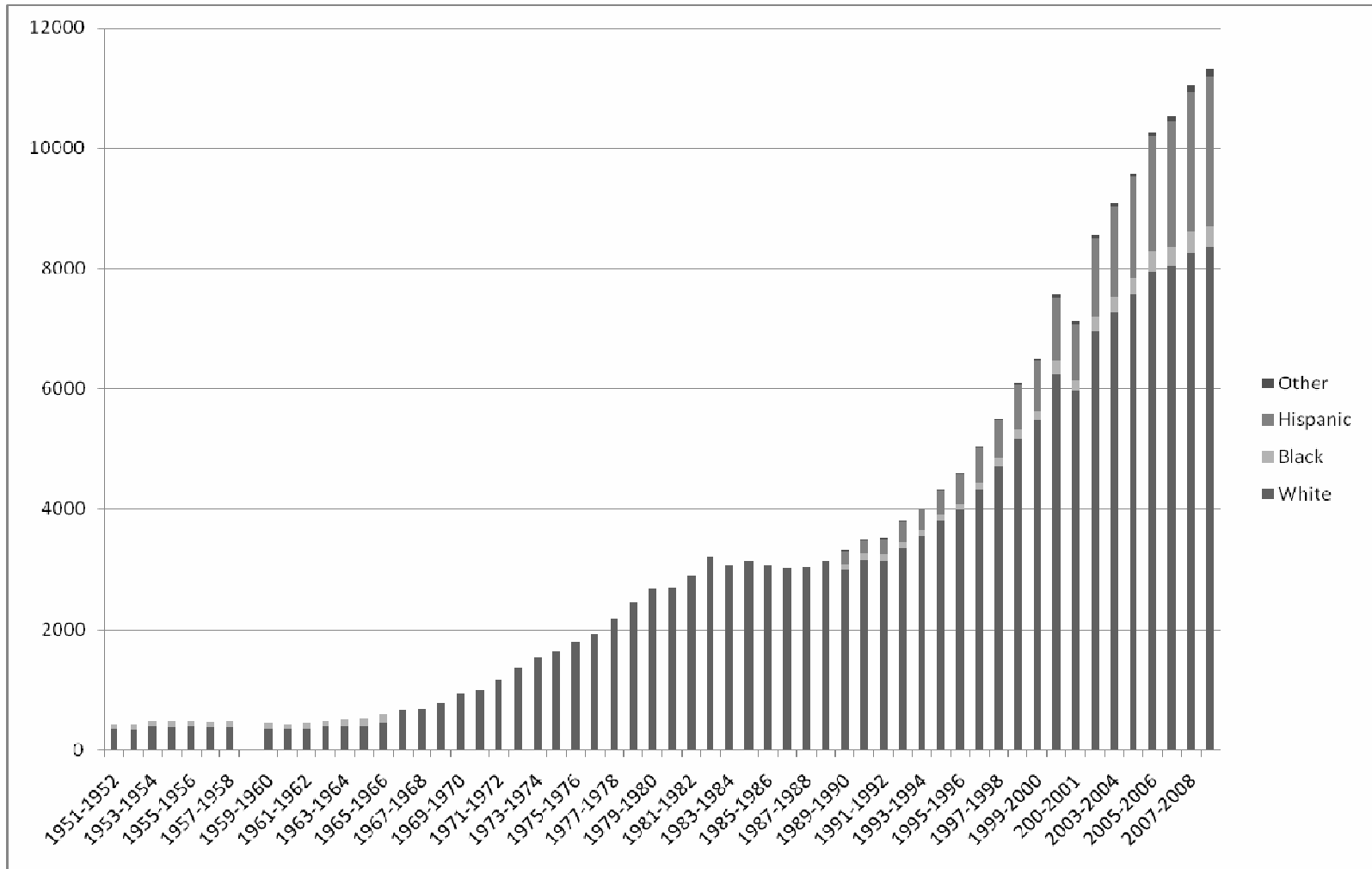


Figure 3: Enrollment in Magnolia Independent School District, 1951–2009.

Seven years later, in 1958, the total enrollment was 484, with 369 White students and 115 Black students. The increase in Black students was primarily due to the school board adding an additional grade level each year to the Negro campus, reducing bussing to Montgomery.

In 1956, a new cafeteria, band hall, and four high school classrooms were added to the campus (*Magnolian*, 1957). This construction was financed by a bond for \$165,000 which also included funding for the construction of four elementary classrooms and an addition to the George W. Carver campus, consisting of a combination gymnasium and auditorium, additional classrooms, lockers, office and storage space, expansion of the playground area, and improvements to the water system and restroom. This bond and the improvements made to the Negro campus were in response to the Supreme Court's ruling to the nation's segregated education policies, including those of MISD (MISD Minutes, July 18, 1955). These projects were completed a year later and gave the campuses the room that was needed (see Figure 4).

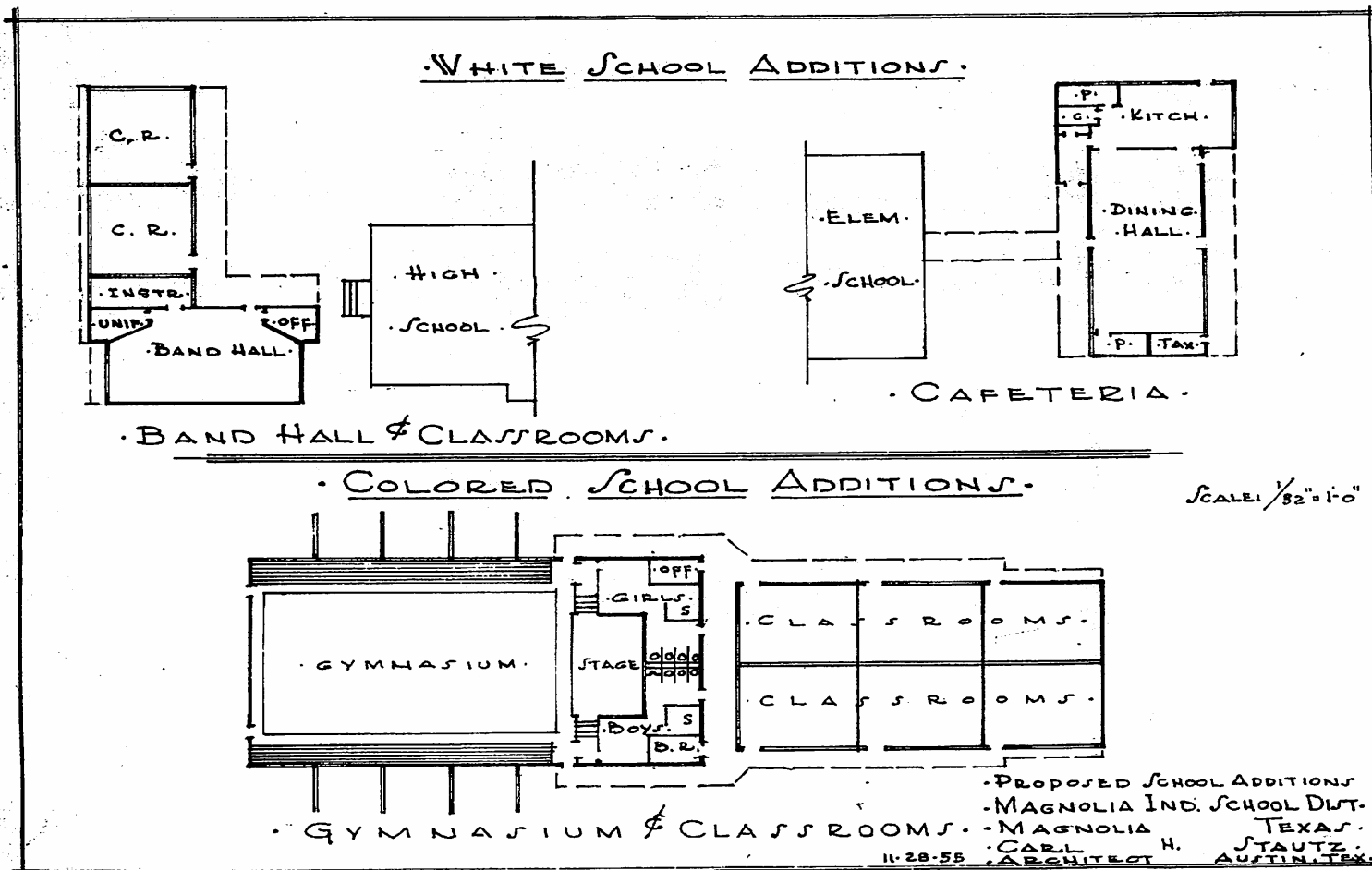


Figure 4: Floor plan of new facilities constructed in 1956.

The superintendent and school board continued to expand the Negro school by adding a grade level each year to the campus from the four original grade levels. In the May 1957 board meeting, the board approved the recommendation of the superintendent to add a high school program of instruction and the addition of ninth grade classes for the 1957–1958 school year. This brought the Negro school, supervised by principal Willie Williams, into the high school level. This action by the board would also slowly reduce the number of Black students being transported to the Negro high school in nearby Montgomery (MISD Minutes, May 13, 1957).

According to Graves and Fulton, Superintendent McIntosh had a determined passion to add one grade level each year to “bring the students home” from Montgomery, and the board also shared this passion. The decision was partially due to the federal government’s integration stance, but the primary reason was to have all the students in the area at the schools within Magnolia (Graves, 2009; Fulton, 2009).

Tensions between Community and Superintendent

At the December 1957 board meeting, six teachers asked to address the board to express complaints about Superintendent McIntosh. These six teachers, including H. H. Swann, asked to speak to the board without the superintendent present. Swann had been in Magnolia for eight years as the football coach. He would leave Magnolia in 1958 to go to Van Horn, Texas for two years then move to Tomball, Texas for four years, before returning to Magnolia (Granger, 1972). After hearing the teachers’ concerns, the board questioned the superintendent (MISD Minutes, December 10, 1957). This was the first evidence of a rift between two factions: the teachers and community on one hand, and the superintendent on the other.

Then, during the January 1958 board meeting, an attorney hired by several community members and teachers, brought a listing of sixteen complaints against the superintendent. The actual complaints are not listed in the board minutes. The superintendent was found not guilty of all sixteen complaints brought forth over three separate days of testimony. The only exception to these complaints noted was that McIntosh could not in good faith confirm or deny that the cook for a Lions Club supper (who was also an MISD employee) used commodity butter from the school kitchen and not the butter purchased by the Lions Club. The board found that the superintendent did act in good faith and was not using commodities inappropriately, and that the butter could have belonged to the organization (MISD Minutes, January 30, 1958). At the following board meeting, the superintendent's contract was unanimously approved for an additional two years (MISD Minutes, February 7, 1958). Four months later, however, McIntosh and his wife resigned from the district and accepted a job at the Texas Education Agency in Austin (MISD Minutes, June 1958; Graves, 2009).

July 2, 1958– June 30, 1969: The End of Segregated Schools

Charles Tergerson was hired by the school board to serve as superintendent in July 1958, and his wife was hired to teach at the elementary school. In June 1959, J. L. Lyon was first hired to the district as high school principal. Enrollment in 1958 was 454 and remained steady with minimal growth until 1969, by which time the total enrollment had increased to 776 (see Figure 3). Enrollment in 1966, the year prior to integration of the Magnolia Independent School District, was 585, with 453 White students and 132 Black students. In 1967, the total student enrollment was 655 (see Figure 3).

Segregation and Community Complacency

The school board minutes of January 11, 1965 contain the following succinct, but significant note:

The superintendent brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees a certificate of compliance for non-discrimination in federally assisted programs which relates to all pupils regardless of race or color. Quite some time was spent in discussing this matter. G. W. McDougle moved that the school district authorize the school board president, G. B. Hosford, to sign the certificate of compliance for full compliance by the Magnolia Independent School District. The motion was seconded by William T. Lee, discussed and passed unanimously (MISD Minutes, January 11, 1965).

This action by the school board was the formal beginning of desegregation in the schools of Magnolia.

The community at this time was quite comfortable with the concept of separate schools due to the perceived equality of resources according to Fulton, Graves, Ross, and Smith. This attitude of comfort with the two schools would continue to cause an issue for the board in a few years. As will be shown later, when offered the opportunity to change schools, both teachers and students from the Carver and Magnolia Campuses declined. The perception of both the teachers and the students was that there were equal resources offered on the racially segregated campuses, and so they opted to continue to

stay where they were. According to Ross, Fulton, and Graves, the students played together and there were no feelings of discrimination by either group (O. Ross, 2009; Fulton, 2009; Graves, 2009).

At the April 1965 school board meeting, the school board discussed at length the Texas Education Agency Accreditation Team's recommendation to add a science lab to the Carver School. The addition was directly connected to funds that could be accessed by the district to build the lab and to fund improvements on other campuses. However, to qualify for the funds, the district had to adhere to the guidelines that mandated addition of the science lab to Carver School. In the following board meeting in May 1965, the board made the following decisions in regards to full desegregation:

A. J. Lloyd moved that the Magnolia ISD do the following effective July 1, 1965:

1. Desegregate and integrate all school busses and that no consideration be given as to race, color, or national origin.
2. Desegregate all grades and that no discrimination be made against anyone in the Magnolia ISD because of race, color, or national origin, and that each and every child and the child's parents or guardians be given freedom of choice of the school to which the child will attend, that in the event one school is overcrowded, consideration will be given first to those pupils living nearest to the school concerned.
3. That transfers be granted by parental request to other school districts; but Magnolia ISD cannot and will not be responsible for transportation to the school in which transferred and neither will Magnolia ISD pay any tuition charges to any other school district. In other words, the transfer will be the full responsibility of the ones transferring.

4. Publicity to the parents and pupils will be made in order that all may know of their rights and that the proper blanks for pre-registration, etc., will be provided through the Superintendent and principals of the Magnolia ISD.

5. All faculty members will have freedom of choice as to the schools that they desire to teach in.


6. That it is the bona fide intention of the Board of Trustees that the Magnolia ISD will comply in all respects with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, guaranteeing no discrimination of any nature to anyone in the Magnolia ISD because of race, color, or national origin, with a unitary, integrated school bus system and a desegregated class room system, based on a guaranteed freedom-of-choice basis (MISD Minutes, May 10, 1965).

The motion was seconded by G. W. McDougle, discussed, and passed unanimously by the Board of Trustees of the Magnolia ISD (MISD Minutes, May 10, 1965).

While the board formally adopted a policy of teachers and students moving freely between schools, there were no participants. All teachers and students remained at their original campuses with no concerns being raised. As seen in Figure 5, each staff member was asked to complete the form requesting transfer to a different campus. However, none of the staff had the desire to change campuses (Fulton, 2009). This attitude was also evidenced by the students, due to the perceived equality of resources and their familiarity with the campuses and student bodies they had been accustomed to (O. Ross, 2009; Graves, 2009).

TO ALL FACULTY MEMBERS:

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it mandatory for all schools using the Freedom-of-Choice Plan for integration to allow all faculty members to select the school in which they desire to teach next school year. Will you please sign your name by the school of your choice on the form below and return to your principal?



 Charles J. Tengerson
 Superintendent of Schools

 Date 3 - 24 - 66

After due consideration of all factors concerned, I make a choice to teach in the following school.

_____ MAGNOLIA JR. & SR. HIGH SCHOOL

_____ MAGNOLIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Law Lee Hood CARVER ELEMENTARY & JR. HIGH SCHOOL

(Please sign in duplicate. One for principal's office and one for the superintendent's office.)

Figure 5: Notice provided in 1966 by MISD to faculty members regarding choice of campus.

With the grade school becoming increasingly more populated, the board made the decision to move two teachers from Carver to the grade school to teach first and third grade. The superintendent explained that the teachers at these two grade levels would implement a strategy known as “team-teaching.” While this reduced the student-teacher ratio, it also assisted the district in achieving compliance with federal mandates for racial integration of its staff (MISD Minutes, December 17, 1966). Due to the sense of complacency and the equality of materials and resources, the students and staff were having to be “pushed” into integration. Carver, due to the foresight of Tergerson and the school board, was currently an elementary and secondary campus because of the addition of a grade level each year. However, the passive attitude of the staff and students was not due to a desire not to integrate, but rather a feeling that the need was not present (O. Ross, 2009). In 1967, the two schools would be fully integrated, with the Carver campus, which had formerly been the Negro school, becoming the intermediate school for all children in the district. This reconfiguration of the district’s grade levels required renovation and expansion at the intermediate school (Carver) and the main campus, financed by a bond of \$225,000 voted on by the constituents of the district.

Odessa Ross, one of the members of that first fully desegregated class (which graduated in 1968), stated that from her perspective, there were no concerns, issues, or racial tensions during the process. Her feeling is that everyone played together anyhow, and going to classes together made sense to the students (O. Ross, 2009). This attitude was shared by the staff and community (Fulton, 2009; Graves, 2009).

In 1966, an additional wing had been added to the high school and junior high campus, at that time a single campus with two wings, one for junior high students and another for high school students. The junior high and high school students shared a cafeteria, library and gym. This also was the year H. H. Swann returned from Tomball ISD to Magnolia ISD and was given the position of football coach of Magnolia High School (*Magnolian*, 1967). Mr. Swann would go on to become a major influence in the growth of the district in the future, serving first as coach and later as athletic director for the district before retiring from Magnolia ISD. One of his players who would eventually become an All-Pro wide receiver in the National Football League, Buddy Dial, would petition the school board several years later to name the athletic stadium in honor of H. H. Swann.

When Superintendent Tergerson announced his intentions to leave MISD in 1968, he recommended his two principals, J. L. Lyon, high school principal, and Pat Brown, elementary principal, to be considered as candidates for the superintendent's position. During the December board meeting, the school board met with both principals individually, but no decision was made (MISD Minutes, November 25, 1968). According to Graves, the reason for Mr. Tergerson's resignation from the district was not because of differences with the board or the community, but due to his desire to return to his native town of Seagoville, Texas (Graves, 2009).

In January 1969, Brown withdrew his name from being considered for the position and the following week the MISD school board extended a contract to yet another applicant, Kenneth Pye, to become the next superintendent of schools. Pye was a junior high principal in the North East Houston district and this was his first

superintendency. While Pye would not become the superintendent until July, he offered to attend all board meetings until Tergerson left the district, since Pye's current principal position with North East Houston was within 50 miles. Both the board and Tergerson felt that this was a good idea (MISD Minutes, January 27, 1969). This board discussion validates the statement by Graves given during the interview that the resignation was amicable and intended only to enable Tergerson to return to Seagoville.

July 1, 1969–January 31, 1974: Accelerating Growth

Enrollment began to increase at a quicker pace during the early 1970s, as shown in Figure 3. According to Graves (2009), Fulton (2009), and Ross (O. Ross, 2009), the northern expansion of Houston, the improvement of highways 290 and 149 and Interstate 45, and the beginning of the master planned community of The Woodlands were the key factors. As it had since the beginnings of the Mink community in the late 1800s, access to transportation would continue to dictate patterns of growth in the Magnolia community and schools.

As Pye began his tenure, there were many changes. Mr. Williams, the principal of Magnolia Intermediate School, was reassigned to become assistant principal of the same school. The board minutes reflect that the board would look for a principal of the intermediate school who could "handle all phases of the school program." Later in the year, Pat Bell would be hired as the intermediate school's principal. During the same meeting Gayle M. "Taz" McGinty would become the assistant principal at the high school. McGinty was a highly respected coach who was pursuing certification for

administration (MISD Minutes, November 18, 1969). McGinty would marry Graves's daughter Tarvah, who would later share with her mother the duties of superintendent's secretary.

New Facilities, New Programs

Magnolia ISD consisted of two campuses—the combined elementary school/high school and the intermediate school—until the 1970s, when population growth forced the district to begin expanding facilities to keep up with the rapid growth. This growth facilitated the district's move from a co-op arrangement with other districts within Montgomery County for servicing the needs of the special education population to having its own dedicated special education department. This department would be housed at the Baptist Church for the 1970–1971 school year (MISD Minutes, January 12, 1970).

In 1969 the teacherage building on the elementary/high school campus ceased to serve as the superintendent's residence during the transition to a new superintendent, and was converted into classrooms to alleviate the overcrowding that the campus was experiencing (Graves, 2004). However, this renovation was not enough to keep up with the scholastic growth in the district.

In 1970, the community passed another bond issue in the amount of \$750,000 to finance building of a new elementary school a block from the elementary/high school campus and to make renovations to the Magnolia Intermediate School campus. Administrative offices and a tax office were built on the campus of the high school. The construction of Magnolia Elementary School on Nichols-Sawmill Road allowed the entire original elementary and high school campus located on FM 1774 to be utilized by

high school students. In the years following the opening of the elementary campus, the old teacherage building was donated to the City of Magnolia and moved closer to town to be used as a museum. The museum did not prosper, however, and the building was eventually sold to George Loner who moved it to Grapevine Lane, restored it, and currently lives in the structure (Graves, 2004).

The school board adopted several instructional programs in 1970. “Project Mainstream,” a training program for low-income adults, was implemented by the board, and a new state-supported kindergarten was added to the district (MISD Minutes, August 10, 1970).

Internal Divisions in District Leadership

During this period, signs of strain between the superintendent and the board began to show. During the January 1971 board meeting, Pye requested that the board not extend his contract past its expiration date in 1973.

At the next month’s meeting, the board appointed H. H. Swann as athletic director in addition to his duties as head coach of the boys’ football team, thus creating the first athletic director position for the district (MISD Minutes, February 8, 1971).

At the same meeting, Pye declined to recommend Pat Bell, the current elementary principal, for a new contract. The board disagreed with the superintendent and voted to extend Bell’s contract. The board minutes state:

Mr. Bell was called before the Board and Superintendent Pye explained the vote to Mr. Bell and expressed to Mr. Bell what the Board had told him in the regard to the support he could expect. He also expressed to Mr. Bell that his one wish was that the school system as a whole function [in an] orderly [fashion], [and] that the Superintendent and Mr. Bell could get along, communicate with each other, and work for the good of the elementary school. The Superintendent pointed out to Mr. Bell that there would be times in the

future when he would have to direct Mr. Bell to do some things he might not agree with, but he felt that these things could be worked out through proper communication. Each board member then addressed Mr. Bell and very explicitly told him that the Superintendent had their support and backing and that he should act as elementary principal and be responsible to the Superintendent. Mr. Bell indicated that he was happy with this arrangement and both he and the Superintendent expressed to the board that they felt that things could be worked out for the betterment of themselves and the school system. (MISD Minutes, February 10, 1971).

This harmony that was desired by the principal and the superintendent also extended to the superintendent and the board. The Board and Superintendent pledged themselves to start anew in their quest for harmony and cooperation with each other and support for each other, and keep foremost in mind the best interests of the Magnolia Independent School District in all future endeavors (MISD Minutes, February 10, 1971).

Unfortunately, this harmony between the superintendent and the board did not last. During the next board meeting, the approval of the minutes was delayed until the Executive Session. A motion was made and seconded that Celeste Graves take the minutes of the meeting. The motion was unanimous and the meeting was halted until she arrived (MISD Minutes, March 8, 1971; Graves, 2009).

This event marked the beginning of the district's practice of having the superintendent's secretary take minutes for the school board meetings. When asked about this, Graves remembers the event well. She recalls that Pye was a controversial superintendent, not necessarily in regard to his administration of the district, but in other areas that were not made clear. His level of trust was low with both the board and those that worked for him. According to Graves, Pye felt insecure and believed the principals

wanted to get rid of him because they thought they knew more about running the district than he did (Graves, 2009).

The purpose of the April 1971 board meeting was to speak to J. L. Lyon, high school principal, about his having been offered a superintendency in another school district. The board unanimously agreed that they wanted to keep him “by any means possible:”

It was then suggested that Mr. Lyon be made Assistant Superintendent of the Magnolia Independent School District but his duties would remain as they [were at that time], and as soon as growth justified this position to be separated from the High School Principalship, then he would assume duties commensurate to the title (MISD Minutes, April 29, 1971).

A salary increase for Lyon was also discussed and approved. Mr. Lyon was called in and, upon being informed of the board’s decision, expressed satisfaction with this arrangement and agreed to it. Superintendent Pye stated that Lyon would be involved in all aspects of school business and that this position would be considered a training position (MISD Minutes, April 29, 1971).

In June of the same year, the district added a special education unit to handle the current and projected increases in enrollment. During the summer of 1970, H. H. Swann was made the assistant principal of the high school in addition to his other duties and responsibilities (MISD Minutes, June 14, 1971).

Malcom Purvis resigned from the school board for one year and his wife Nancy was hired as a physical education supervisor for the elementary campus. Purvis later

became the county commissioner, a position he held until his death in 2000. Nancy Purvis later received a degree enabling her to become a teacher; she remained in the district for many years

During the January 1972 board meeting, Odessa Ross was hired to teach in the district. Ross, a member of the first graduating class following the integration of the schools, went to college and returned to teach in the district she graduated from (O. Ross, 2009). During the same meeting, the superintendent's contract was extended until 1974. Four board members voted for the motion, two opposed it, and one abstained. The minutes record the board's opinion that the superintendent needed another year of evaluation by three of the board members (MISD Minutes, January 10, 1972). This action may suggest that the board, superintendent, and principals were becoming increasingly amicable toward one another.

Accelerating Growth and a Boundary Dispute

During this period, the *Conroe Courier* ran a front-page article discussing the rapid growth of the Magnolia Independent School District. The article states, "In 1969, the district had 900 students and 40 faculty members, which has increased to 1,400 students and 60 faculty members in 1973" ("Magnolia ISD," March 18, 1973). The article also quotes Pye's estimate that the district would have 4,000 students in five years; however, this would prove to be an exaggerated estimate. The article further stated that special education, art, cosmetology, choir, drafting, Spanish, and distributive education courses were added for the 1972–1973 school year. It is interesting that most

of the classes added during this period of growth were either fine arts or vocational classes rather than core subjects. This trend would reverse by the academic year beginning in 2000.

The February 29 board meeting minutes note the beginning of a boundary dispute that would occupy the district for many years:

Mr. George Mitchell and associates talked with the Board about the Satellite City to be developed by George Mitchell off Highway 75. As this development would overlap into the Magnolia School District, Mr. Mitchell requested that Magnolia allow Conroe Schools to annex that part of the Egypt area that would be available to the Magnolia Schools at a good price if the annexation was worked out. The Board agrees to let Mr. Mitchell know something within a few weeks (MISD Minutes, February 29, 1972).

In the May 11 board meeting, the board voted to not allow the detachment of this area to the Conroe Independent School District. This was the period during which Mitchell Development began to create the community now known as The Woodlands. The westernmost part of The Woodlands borders FM 2978, but does not adjoin the highway that constitutes the eastern boundary of the Magnolia Independent School District boundary. However, MISD boundaries enclosed about 8,500 acres to the east of 2978, of which 7,781 acres would be detached from MISD to Conroe ISD in the 1980s. Otherwise, Conroe ISD encompassed all the area, excluding this narrow area on the east side of FM 2978. This area was important for Mitchell Development to have within Conroe ISD, so that the residential housing of the planned community would not be split between two school districts. Magnolia ISD could envision the possibility of taxable real estate being built within this area of the district and did not feel inclined to

grant annexation of the area to Conroe ISD (see Appendix K: Historical and Current Boundaries, Magnolia Independent School District). This taxable territory boundary issue would remain in constant flux until a 1980s tax issue and subsequent funding crisis would force MISD to sell the taxable area to CISD in two separate transactions, one in 1983, and the second in 1993.

More Leadership Struggles

In a letter addressed to the school board dated September 8th, 1973, Pye informed the board that the competitive bid law had been violated by the school board. Not coincidentally, during the October 1973 school board meeting, the following was decided in executive session:

Through joint agreement of the Magnolia School Superintendent and the Board of Trustees, the Magnolia Independent School District will be accepting applications for a new superintendent. Applications will be accepted beginning immediately for the 1974–1975 school term, which begins July 1, 1974. (MISD Minutes, October 22, 1973).

At the following January's board meeting, the board decided to appoint Patrick Brown as interim superintendent through June 30, 1974.

During the term of Mr. Brown, there were few changes. During the May board meeting, the trustees appointed J. T. Baker to the superintendency (MISD Minutes, May, 1974).

July 1, 1974 – April 18, 1980: Continued Growth

In 1975 the Mitchell Development Corporation again requested of the board to exchange with Conroe ISD property located in the newly created community of The Woodlands. After much discussion by the board and extensive review of maps,

Magnolia ISD again declined the request (MISD Minutes, September 8, 1975). During the same board meeting, the trustees approved a plan to add temporary buildings at the elementary school to relieve overcrowding.

The continuing expansion of Houston and especially the nearby development of The Woodlands master-planned community generated an influx of students enrolling in the Magnolia schools (see Figure 3). Many of those who worked construction in The Woodlands, for example, resided within the Magnolia ISD due to its lower cost of living. While part of The Woodlands lay within the boundaries of MISD, this was viewed as an undesirable situation by the developers of The Woodlands, who wanted all the students living in the community to attend Conroe ISD. This matter would be an ongoing conflict for most of the next decade.

In 1976, the community approved a bond to fund construction of a new high school campus on Nichols-Sawmill Road. The new campus would be built on a 42-acre tract about a quarter of a mile from the new Magnolia Elementary campus. This bond for \$3 million dollars, while allowing for the new high school campus to be built, also allotted funds for the creation of a new band hall on the old campus and a transportation center to be built at the rear of Magnolia Elementary.

During the June 17 board meeting, John Paul Watson was hired as the high school principal. Mr. Watson would become an integral participant in the future growth of Magnolia Independent School District. With the addition of Watson at the high school, the administrative staff who would prove to be of significance in the growth of MISD comprised Watson and Swann, then at the high school, and Lyon, at that time

occupying the assistant superintendent position. One year later, Swann was appointed principal of the intermediate school. The board of trustees also appointed Watson and Lyon to act as interim superintendents during Superintendent Baker's vacation time.

Visions of Excellence in the Classroom

During the next two years, from 1976 to 1978, the administrative staff consistently strived to improve curricular and procedural items to facilitate student learning. These were recommended and accepted by the board. The superintendent and administrative staff presented the following documents to the board during the June 1978 meeting: a philosophy of education; a time line for goals and objectives created by a committee of 128 staff , 46 parents, and 70 students; and the final listing of these student development goals. The Philosophy of Education stated:

We Believe: The Magnolia Public Schools program is dedicated to the children. The purpose of education [is] to provide for the continual development and improvement of every individual to the extent of his abilities. The future of our country depends upon the education of our youth. Therefore, public education should be the concern of everyone. We feel that we should stress ideas and ideals that helped us make our country the greatest nation on earth.

The public school is an educational facility of the community, established to maintain strengthen, and improve our democratic way of life, and that the community should be kept fully informed as to the activities, accomplishments, and problems of its school in order that the community input might be considered in developing and maintaining a wholesome school environment.

It is imperative for us to teach honesty, integrity, initiative, industry, reverence, and respect for the rights of others, respect for law and authority, self-reliance, good sportsmanship, and vigorous effort on the part of everyone to achieve academic excellence. It is our responsibility to provide the best opportunities possible to enable our children to obtain these achievements. (MISD Minutes, June 12, 1978).

The Student Development Goals were as follows:

Whether apparently visible or not, each school district lives in a symbiotic relationship with its community and surrounding area. The educational programs are tied, at least indirectly, to the ideas, attitudes, and desires of the public; and so the educational course plotted should provide academic, vocational, and social skills necessary to supply a continuous demand for new and productive citizenry.

It is the goal of the Magnolia Independent School District, and the responsible duty of its employees to provide a comprehensive educational atmosphere more directly aligning itself with student needs correlated to specific individual skills, attitudes, and insight; and when these conditions conducive to educational attainment are met the student shall achieve:

1. Basic academic skills
2. Fundamental knowledge and skills for economic and occupational competency through logical thinking
3. Fundamental understanding and appreciation of citizenship
4. A workable balance of physiological and environmental health and worthy use of leisure time.
5. An understanding and appreciation of cultural differences
6. Competency in personal and social skills (See Appendix I: Magnolia Independent School District Philosophy of Education).

Funding More Expansion, Adding Bilingual Education

An additional bond was passed in 1978 for \$1.9 million to construct an athletic complex behind the new high school campus, which was still under construction. This athletic addition was needed to meet the needs of the growing community; new students, the children of families living in the burgeoning suburbs spreading north from Houston and west from The Woodlands, were continuing to swell the rolls in the Magnolia ISD.

In addition to growth in the athletics program, that same year bilingual education was implemented in Magnolia Independent School District at the elementary level, due to an increase in the population of students of Hispanic descent. The newly adopted policy stated:

The Bilingual Program of the Magnolia Independent School District is directed toward students of limited English speaking ability. The Program shall operate within the guidelines of the State Board Policy. The steps are as follows:

1. All students of a second language suspect will be surveyed.
2. Each identified student will be tested on English Proficiency and Proficiency in the other language. Once a child has been surveyed and tested, it will not be necessary to be done again.
3. Information gained for the survey and testing will be used to provide a program of special language when needed. (MISD Minutes, September 11, 1978).

In 1979, the original elementary/high school campus became Magnolia Junior High with the departure of the high school students from the old, historic campus to attend classes in the modern building that had just been completed. The district administration offices were moved to the new high school, giving the tax office room for expansion in its original location (Graves, 2004). Mentions of this campus construction project would appear in several board meetings during this period. The original contractor for the work was accused of poor construction, which resulted in litigation. The second contractor attempted to correct the errors to the best of its ability, but the structure would continue to have roof leaks and wall separations.

During the 1979 school board trustee elections, David Hill was elected to the school board (see Appendix G: School Board Trustees of Magnolia Independent School District). Hill was the constable for the Montgomery County precinct the district resides in.

Later in the same year, the field house on the original campus was damaged severely by a fire. \$14,885 in local funds was spent to rebuild the field house, and the labor for the project was donated by Don Townsend, a school board member. Renovations were carried out at the historic campus during the next twenty years to update the facility, but there were no other significant changes in the campus during this time.

Summary

During 1950–1980, the Magnolia Independent School District experienced many changes due to growth from the expansion of Houston, and especially due to the improvement of Highway 149, Interstate 45, and Highway 290, all of which converge on Houston and spread outward from the city to flank the area of the school district. The influx of people caused many facility, curricular, and leadership changes within the district.

In addition to the population growth, the district had to adjust to the new realities of school integration. Interestingly, neither the Black nor the White population of the community felt a great need to leave their segregated campuses, due to the perceived equality of resources. However, the social policy mandated by the federal government impelled the district to pursue and achieve full integration by the late 1960s. As persistent as the growth during this period was, it would be easily eclipsed by the massive and rapid growth Magnolia Independent School District would experience in the decades following the 1980s.

CHAPTER VI

RAPID EXPANSION AND GROWING PAINS, 1980 - 2009

Introduction

As Magnolia Independent School District grew from a newly created independent district housed in a single building to a district composed of several campuses, the district coped with the challenges of both paying for the construction of new facilities and meeting the needs of an expanding curriculum, all in the midst of sweeping social changes and shifting demographics. As the population of the district continued to increase, many campuses, personnel, and programs were added to keep up with the tremendous growth—along with the public financing required to make these adaptations possible.

However, this public financing began to generate opposition by the fiscally conservative taxpayers of the Magnolia Independent School District. In the early 1980s several taxing entities in Montgomery County, including MISD, experienced a demand for a tax rollback by the voters of the county.

Somewhat paradoxically, this event provided the impetus for concluding the decade-long detachment and annexation of taxable territory that had been requested by the developers of The Woodlands. As a result, despite the temporary financial crisis occasioned by the tax rollback, the district was able to continue to meet the needs of the growing and changing student population.

The Magnolia Independent School District prides itself on the desire to remember the past accomplishments and dedication of those who guided the district through these and earlier changes. During the period covered by this chapter, the district recognized the importance of its heritage and the persons who helped shape it. As new campuses and facilities are added to the district, several are dedicated to these individuals, a number of whom continue to be active and honored in the community.

January 1980–June 1983: Leadership Turnover and Parent Unrest

In 1980, the board declined, in a 2–5 vote, to extend Superintendent Baker’s contract for an additional year. Assistant Superintendent Lyon’s contract, however, was extended in a 5–2 vote. The voting on the two contracts fell along different lines among the board members (MISD Minutes, January 14, 1980). During the March board meeting, Baker would request a release from his contract, effective April 18, 1980. This request was granted by the board with a letter of accommodation from the board. During the period from April 18 until a new superintendent was hired, J. L. Lyon served as interim superintendent (MISD Minutes, March 24, 1980).

According to Graves (2009), Baker was “unorthodox” compared to community expectations. The board desired a strong sense of professionalism to be portrayed and promoted among staff members, which was counter to the leadership style of Baker (Watson, 2009). However, what Baker lacked in professionalism and knowledge of construction, he made up in his expertise in the finance arena (Graves, 2009). Watson views the nonextension of Baker’s contract as a conflict in perception of where the boundaries were between the board’s duties and those of the superintendent (Watson, 2009).

Watson and Graves further state that Lyon would have made a good superintendent. Graves comments that Lyon was very smart in the school business and deserved the position (Graves, 2009). Watson explains that J. L. Lyon was not interested in the position as superintendent of schools, perhaps because he felt that the board was too involved in the daily management of the school district (Watson, 2009).

Buddy Dial, a former student and professional football player, appeared before the board during the February 11, 1980 school board meeting and requested that the board consider naming the new football stadium Swann Stadium in honor of H. H. Swann. The board accepted the request and unanimously voted to name the stadium after the man who had served the district for over a quarter of a century as a coach, head coach, athletic director, assistant principal, and principal.

During the same meeting in executive session, the board was asked by H. H. Swann to accept his resignation effective at the end of the school year. This was accepted by the board as well as movement of principals within the district at the following locations for the 1980–1981 school year: Vera Jo Lock, elementary school; John Paul Watson, intermediate school; and Merle Lock, junior high school (MISD Minutes, February 11, 1980).

During the June 1980 board meeting, the theme of disagreement between the community and the administration recurred. An organization named Concerned Parents of Magnolia presented to the board a list of concerns regarding problems within the

school district. The problems stated in the letter were:

unsafe electrical wiring at the junior high; shortage of classrooms; matters involving counseling, curriculum, substitute teachers, and discipline; teacher incentives and benefits; the student handbook; requests made of principals by parents; staff salaries (especially those of central office staff); the district's building program; and gasoline prices paid by the district. The group requested that these issues be addressed at the next board meeting (MISD Minutes, June 9, 1980).

This action by members of the community marks the beginning of a difficult political and financial period that would continue for nearly a decade for Magnolia Independent School District. Community mistrust of the MISD central office's financial policies and management would ultimately result in tax rollbacks that would have far-reaching effects on the MISD in years to come—and would play a part in bringing about the settlement of the longstanding detachment of taxable territory among MISD, the developers of The Woodlands, and Conroe Independent School District.

July 1, 1980–June 30, 1983: Expanding Structure and a Funding Crisis

The Magnolia Independent School District board of trustees elected Leslie Tucker to the position of Superintendent of Schools effective July 1, 1980 (MISD Minutes, May 23, 1980). Tucker came to Magnolia from Spring Branch Independent School District, where he had been employed as a band director. Tucker was professional in appearance and actions, qualities the school board was looking for in a superintendent during this time (Graves, 2009).

During the first board meeting under the superintendency of Tucker, the Concerned Parents of Magnolia had two remaining issues on their list, curriculum and financial issues, that the superintendent committed to resolving (MISD Minutes, July 14, 1980).

The position of director of curriculum and instruction was created during the December 1980 board meeting. This was previously filled by a person also functioning as a campus administrator, but from this point forward MISD would have a position dedicated entirely to curriculum and instruction (MISD Minutes, December 1, 1980; see Appendix J: Organization Charts for Magnolia Independent School District). The creation of this dedicated position was necessitated by the district's increasing enrollment (see Figure 3), combined with a new state-mandated testing standard that was being implemented at that time.

In 1981, the community voted to sell \$4.0 million in school bonds to fund the construction of Bear Branch Elementary School in the Oklahoma community in the easternmost part of the district, bordering Conroe Independent School District and The Woodlands. The creation of this campus was deemed necessary due to the increase of students residing in the portion of The Woodlands that fell within MISD. This campus, built on Kenlake, just off of FM 2978, consisted of an elementary school and a transportation center to cover the busing needs for the east side of the district (MISD Minutes, May 1, 1981). The project was completed in 1982, and later in the same year, another \$4.5 million in school bonds funded renovations at several campuses and an addition to the high school (MISD Minutes, October 14, 1981).

During the June 1981 board meeting, Macik provided an update on student performance on the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills (TABS) test, but no data was included in the minutes. The board also approved employment of Beverly Robinson as the Magnolia Elementary School principal (MISD Minutes, June 22, 1981). Robinson would go on to become influential in the district with regard to curriculum.

Howard Murchison was hired by the board in September 1982 as the Finance Director for the district. Significantly, in light of the growing financial unrest in the community, Murchison would serve as the director of fiscal control (MISD Minutes, September 15, 1982). Also in connection with fiscal matters, during the October board meeting minutes contain the following information: “The Superintendent recommended that the Board approve the correction of the Effective Tax Rate from .8371 to 1.0181 for the 1982/83 school year.” This motion passed unanimously.

The next motion was: “The Superintendent recommended that the Board reject the calculated Effective Tax Rate of 1.0181 for the year 1982/83 and announce its intention to raise taxes, setting a Public Hearing for November 1, 1982.” This motion also passed unanimously.

The final fiscal motion of the meeting was: “The Superintendent recommended that the Board of Trustees approve a Resolution to Borrow Money for an amount not to exceed \$900,000 and that such approval authorizes the required signatures to conduct this financial transaction.” Again, the motion passed unanimously (MISD Minutes, October 18, 1982).

These decisions, along with actions by other school personnel that were perceived as fiscally rash, frustrated the Magnolia community, which had long prided itself for being financially prudent. These feelings added to a growing sense of discontentment in the community with the leadership being provided for the Magnolia Independent School District. Residents noted that the tax rate for the county had experienced a 61 percent increase over the year, and therefore the property values increased nearly 195 percent due to the reappraisal of real estate under the authority of the Montgomery County Appraisal District ("Tax Rates Discussed," January 14, 1983, p.1).

Given this growing dissatisfaction, it probably should not have been surprising that in the school board election of April 2, 1983, the community voted on an ad valorem tax rate limitation. The tax rollback election for MISD made the district one of six local taxing entities in Montgomery County that were facing such a measure. The measure passed with a vote of 1,403 for to 787 against (MISD Minutes, April 18, 1983).

The students staged a walkout in April 1983, protesting the board's subsequent cost-saving decision to cut all extracurricular programs, including band, football, and other programs. Parents picketed the schools for a week, protesting the budget cuts that totaled \$1 million ("Magnolia Parents Picket," April 27, 1983, p 1.) The community took the cuts to the county court to request an injunction on the district to cease the cuts. Judge Olen Underwood denied the temporary restraining order, however, and allowed the cuts ("Judge Allows School Cuts," April 14, 1983, p.3). Later, the district did indeed scale back the extracurricular programs, but did not eliminate them entirely. Over the next two years, all programs were reinstated.

The citizens of the district demanded tightening of the budget and cutting programs that were not critical. Many extracurricular programs were cut to keep the district going ("Magnolia Schools Face Program Cuts," June 15, 1983, p.1).

During this time there were many accusations of mismanagement of funds by district personnel, including utilization of school district credit cards for personal use (MISD Minutes, June 27, 1983). The *Houston Chronicle* reported a total of credit card purchases in the amount of \$2,226 that were to be repaid by one district official ("Magnolia School Officials Questioned," July 27, 1983, p.1). While several such incidents did apparently occur, no legal action was taken, and it could be inferred that these instances were due to poor financial judgment rather than malicious or fraudulent intent. This interpretation is borne out by both Graves (2009) and Watson (2009).

Leslie Tucker submitted his resignation as superintendent, and it was accepted by the trustees during the May 1983 board meeting (MISD Minutes, May 2, 1983). According to Graves, Tucker managed his office efficiently and ran the schools well. If this assessment is granted, it may be that his resignation was due more to a perception of the general loss of credibility in the community rather than any individual professional failings. Tucker left the Magnolia area and moved to Austin to take a position outside of education (Graves, 2009).

July 1, 1983–March 24, 1986: Boundary Disputes Resolved

Howard Murchison, director of fiscal control, was offered the position of superintendent of schools by the trustees during the May 1983 board meeting, to be finalized after the contract was mutually agreed upon (MISD Minutes, May 9, 1983).

Murchison was skillful in the areas of school financial management. In order to facilitate the proper budgetary process, the board of trustees during the June 1983 board meeting:

...to approve the resolution, on file in the Superintendent's office, on the detachment/annexation of territory effecting the boundaries of the Conroe Independent School District and Magnolia Independent School District, said territory being located in and owned by The Woodlands. This resolution is basically an intent to "to proceed" with negotiations and not a final commitment "to exchange" (MISD Minutes, June 27, 1983).

This was to mark the beginning of the detachment of taxable territory and allow annexation by Conroe ISD that had been requested by Mitchell Development for ten years. Due to immediate financial needs in the district, this offer was now being considered in a more favorable light. The resulting cash infusion enabled the board to continue the district's extracurricular activities and retain staff who would have been cut due to the loss of funds due to the tax rollback. The detachment of taxable territory was approved during the October board meeting:

...to approve the detachment/annexation of territory effecting the boundaries of the Conroe Independent School District and the Magnolia Independent School District, said territory being located in and owned by The Woodlands. Further, to consummate this exchange, The Woodlands agree to award several published concessions plus a seventeen (17) acre tract of land adjoining Bear Branch Elementary School to the Magnolia Independent School District (MISD Minutes, October 24, 1983).

J. L. Lyon submitted his letter of retirement to the district during the May 14, 1984 board meeting. This brought to a close the professional education career of an

individual with one of the most long-term influences within the school district. Lyon would continue to be influential in the district by serving as a trustee on the school board.

As mentioned previously, during the March 1985 board meeting, the teacherage that had housed many superintendents in the past was given to the city as a museum.

...that the residential building on the Magnolia Junior High School campus be donated to the City of Magnolia to be used as a historical museum celebrating the State of Texas Sesquicentennial. The City of Magnolia will be responsible for all relocation and restoration costs. This donation is subject to written approval, direction, guidelines, and regulations as recommended by the school district's legal counsel (MISD Minutes, March 25, 1985).

Also as noted above, the museum failed to take firm root in the community. Subsequently George Loner purchased the building, moved it to Grapevine Lane, restored it, and currently occupies the structure as a residence (Graves, 2004).

Superintendent Murchison, as might be expected from his background, was knowledgeable in school finance and is widely credited for the district's recovery from the tax rollback of 1983. However, the board did not extend his contract past the 1987 date, as noted in the January 28, 1983 board minutes (MISD Minutes, January 28, 1983). Murchison resigned from Magnolia Independent School District in March 1986 (MISD Minutes, March 24, 1986).

In 1985, Murchison hired a secretary who could follow in Celeste Graves's long tenure: Tarvah Graves McGinty, the daughter of Graves and the wife of Gayle McGinty (McGinty, 2010). Graves states that McGinty had the personality to work successfully with Murchison. According to Graves, while Murchison was very good at finance, he was a gruff and abrupt person. He enjoyed assertively challenging

individuals on their ideas and some found this to be intimidating. Where his predecessor, Tucker, though not perceived as financially astute, was a “people person” who purchased a home in the district, Murchison was generally seen as the inverse of Tucker with regard to his relations with the staff, the community, and district finance.

Superintendent Murchison had created a central office structure consisting of a superintendent and three assistant superintendents, a large central office administrative staff for a district the size of Magnolia Independent School District at that time. One of his assistant superintendents was M. R. “Bob” Tilley. Following Murchison’s resignation, the school board appointed Bob Tilley as acting superintendent until a replacement could be found (MISD Minutes, March 24, 1986). At the time, Tilley was serving as assistant superintendent for curriculum, and the board decided he was the best of the three assistant superintendents to conduct the business of the district on a short-term basis (see Appendix J: Organization Charts for Magnolia Independent School District). During the three months Tilley was superintendent, the district finalized the addition of six classrooms to the Magnolia Intermediate Campus, a renovation funded by \$283,341 in local monies.

The locally funded addition to the intermediate school campus was completed in January 1987. In 1988, the district added a weight training and exercise facility at Magnolia High School, using only local funds in the amount of \$95,289. This project was completed in August 1988 as the students were returning from summer break. Additional local funds of \$256,512 were used to construct a six-classroom addition to

Bear Branch Elementary, and \$201,512 was spent for a learning resource center addition and renovation of the physical education facilities at Magnolia Elementary School (MISD Minutes, December 12, 1988; see Figure 3).

**July 1, 1989–June 30, 1992: Growth in Physical Facilities
and Expanding Hispanic Enrollment**

In 1989 the MISD board approved completion of the construction of the six-classroom additions to Bear Branch Elementary and at Magnolia Elementary, construction of the learning resource center, and renovation of the physical education facilities. Four classrooms were created at Bear Branch Elementary by renovating the physical education facility, funded by local monies in the amount of \$48,014. This work was performed by the MISD maintenance department in 1990. To replace the renovated physical education facility at Bear Branch Elementary, a new P.E. facility was created using local funds in the amount of \$97,250 and hiring an outside contractor. However, MISD chose to use the maintenance department to complete the electrical work, using an additional \$11,242 of local funds. As demonstrated in Figure 3, the district began growing at a rapid rate and the constant construction became a way of life for the district and community.

Also during this period, enrollment of Hispanic students and other minorities began to increase. This demographic change would necessitate curriculum and program changes in subsequent years (see Figure 3).

School district personnel interviewed listed various factors as possible contributors to the rise in Hispanic enrollment. According to Pat Yarbrough, director of advanced academic services, many Hispanic persons moved into the area initially to

work on the racing horse farms that were established in the area by the 1990s. The trend continued due to the availability of construction jobs in the area and in The Woodlands, nearby. The lower cost of living, as opposed to that of Houston, may have also been a factor (Yarbrough, 2010). Elizabeth Torres, director of bilingual and English-as-second-language (ESL) education, noted in an interview on February 10, 2010, that Harris County is now home to more Hispanics than Los Angeles County. Echoing Yarbrough's assessment, she also adds that cheaper housing, available in Magnolia's more rural setting, is also a draw for many persons in this demographic group.

In 1991, a school bond was passed in the amount of \$8.3 million to construct an elementary school, later to be named J. L. Lyon Elementary School, on Nichols-Sawmill Road. The same issue would also fund renovations to Magnolia Intermediate and renovation to the classrooms of one of the halls at Magnolia Junior High School (MISD Minutes, September 23, 1991). Utilizing the same bond funds, the district authorized construction of a new gymnasium, renovation of the central office area to become classrooms, and building of a 200-person-capacity addition to Magnolia High School. Finally, the bond issue funded the purchase the Texas Banc Savings building and its renovation for use as an educational support center. These construction and renovation projects were completed in September 1993.

Dr. Richard Capps resigned from Magnolia Independent School District during the January 1992 board meeting (MISD Minutes, January 13, 1992). According to school board members, Capps had "done an excellent job budgeting and has been very instrumental in keeping control of costs for the district." ("Magnolia Superintendent announces retirement", 1992). Dr. Capps resigned due to health-related issues.

According to McGinty (2010), he suffered a mild heart attack and subsequently decided to leave education and venture into real estate. With the retirement of Capps, the district employed Derrith Welch as Superintendent of Schools.

July 1, 1992–June 7, 1999: Expanding Programs and Boundary Changes

Derrith Welch was employed as superintendent of schools for Magnolia Independent School District during the April 1992 board meeting; he would assume the position July 1, 1992 (MISD Minutes, April 13, 1992). Under Welch's leadership, the remaining taxable territory in The Woodlands would be detached and annexed by Conroe Independent School District.

As The Woodlands community continued to grow on the district's eastern side, The Woodlands Corporation requested a second detachment of acreage to Conroe Independent School District. The board minutes state:

Roger Galatas, President of The Woodlands Corporation, then submitted to the Board a new offer of monetary consideration for the detachment of 7,781 acres of land from the Magnolia ISD and annexation to the Conroe ISD. Under this latest proposal, The Woodland Corporation would give Magnolia ISD \$315,000 for debt reduction; \$150,000, payable in \$30,000 installments over five years, for scholastic enrichment; 57.5 acres of land for school sited in areas owned by TWC; and yearly payments to the school district over the next twenty years which would total \$11,138,428. The combined total of the new proposal adds up to \$12,076,878. Mr. Galatas' presentation included two handouts to the Board: a four page document itemizing payments to MISD, the impact these payments would have on the MISD tax rate, and the financial benefit to MISD; and two, signed, original copies of the new proposal (MISD Minutes, July 13, 1992).

Superintendent Welch stated that a public forum must be held prior to voting on the acceptance. There were four people in the audience, according to board minutes, and all four people publically stated that this agreement would be beneficial.

Unlike the original boundary change request years earlier, and perhaps because of the resolution of that matter in a manner favorable to MISD finances, the board unanimously voted to accept this offer from The Woodlands Corporation (MISD Minutes, July 13, 1992). However, after consulting with the attorney for Magnolia Independent School District, the board rescinded the vote and did not allow detachment of the acreage. If this action had been finalized, Magnolia would have had no tax base in The Woodlands, therefore rescinding the agreement was seen as being financially advantageous for the future. The district later renegotiated the amounts and accepted the annexation of the land by the Conroe Independent School District. The first check was presented to the board in July 1993 (MISD Minutes, July 12, 1993; see Appendix K: Historical and Current Boundaries, Magnolia Independent School District).

J. L. Lyon, a past campus administrator and assistant superintendent, had been on the school board since a year after his retirement in 1984. Lyon died on November 7, 1992 during open heart surgery, leaving the district without a board member and suffering the loss of a long-time, influential MISD administrator and board member (Zach, 1992). Lyon began his career as a coach and later became a campus administrator in Axtell, Texas; he came to Magnolia in 1959 and had remained in the town until his death (Jennings, 1992). The board of trustees had previously planned to name the new elementary school Walnut Creek Elementary, but unanimously voted to name the elementary school in J. L. Lyon's honor during the November 1992 board meeting (Zach, 1992).

At its February meeting, the MISD board of trustees created the position of Director of Special Programs (MISD Minutes, February 8, 1993; see Appendix J: Organization Charts for Magnolia Independent School District). According to Lynn Blair, current Director of Special Programs, the position was created due to the needs of the district's special education population. Previously, MISD had secured directorship of its special education programs through the Montgomery County Co-op, which consisted of neighboring school districts Willis, New Waverly, Montgomery, and Magnolia (Blair, 2010).

In 1994, MISD voters passed a \$14.9 million bond issue (MISD Minutes, February 28, 1994). This bond funded the construction of Bear Branch Junior High School on FM 2978, conversion of Magnolia Intermediate School into a pre-kindergarten through 5th grade elementary school, and junior high and high school renovations including parking lot repairs and reroofing. At the time, “[p]roponents and school district officials cited the expanding enrollment of the district as the need for the \$14.9 million proposal. Growth rates for the district are expected to continue at a rate of seven to eight percent per year” (Jennings, 1994).

The school board named the new elementary school after Willie E. Williams, who retired as a junior high assistant principal in 1980 (MISD Minutes, November 14, 1994). Mr. Williams was the principal at the G. W. Carver Elementary School, which occupied that same location prior to the renovation. Williams attended the dedication of the new building, with many of his family members and past students ("Williams Elementary Dedicated," 1995). The article further states that his relationship with the students and community was close; many students referred to him as “Mr. Willie,” as

they had done from the time he began his career in Magnolia Common School District #6 in 1940. Other students referred to him as “Fessor Williams” and characterized him as a “strict” but “caring” person (Flake, 2001). Williams died on October 23, 2001 in Conroe where he resided following his retirement (Flake, 2001).

Construction funded by the 1994 bond issue was completed and accepted by the school board in August 1996. A 1999 bond issue in the amount of \$49.98 million was used for the purchase of 128 acres at the corner of FM 1488 and FM 249, the construction of a new building for the high school students, the construction of Cedric C. Smith Elementary, built on a purchased 15-acre site on the corner of Hardin Store Road and Champions Glen, and various minor renovations and improvements to existing schools (MISD Minutes, March 4, 1999).

Superintendent Derrith Welch submitted his resignation to the board during the April 1999 board meeting (MISD Minutes, April 7, 1999). According to Graves and Watson, Welch retired from the Texas Teacher Retirement System and accepted a superintendent position in Oklahoma. The Magnolia Independent School District Board of Trustees extended an offer to Michael Holland during the June 1999 board meeting. During the same meeting, the board appointed John Paul Watson as interim superintendent (MISD Minutes, June 7, 1999).

July 1 1999–June 1, 2008: School Finance and Recognizing District History

The following month, Todd Stephens was employed by the board as assistant superintendent and Michael Holland was appointed as superintendent of schools (MISD Minutes, July 5, 1999).

The 2001 bond election was presented in three propositions totaling \$45.35 million; all three propositions passed. Proposition I (\$27,625,000) funded the construction of Nichols Sawmill Elementary; a new campus for Bear Branch Elementary; conversion of both the old Bear Branch Elementary and Magnolia Junior High into sixth grade campuses; and various minor repairs and improvements to other campuses within the district (MISD Minutes, April 3, 2001). The construction phase funded by this bond issue was completed September 2002.

Local funds in the amount of \$1,347,200 were used to construct Alpha Academy, an alternative high school of choice, in 2003. Alpha Academy had its beginnings in 2002 within the west wing of the Magnolia Sixth Grade campus.

Proposition II (\$13,225,000) funded the future construction of an elementary campus if or when the district exceeded 4,600 students, a population level designated by the district as a “trigger point.” This enrollment number was reached in 2004 and the mandated building was completed in August 2005. Proposition III (\$4,500,000) funded the construction of a natatorium beside the new campus of Magnolia High School (MISD Minutes, April 3, 2001). This was completed in 2003.

In 2004, the voters of MISD passed yet another three-proposition bond in the total amount of \$84,100,000. Proposition I (\$68,100,000) funded the construction of Magnolia West High School on FM 1774, which opened in August 2006; a 300-student-capacity addition to Magnolia Elementary; new land purchases; and technology and transportation upgrades. Magnolia West represented an historic event in the district as

MISD outgrew the ability to adequately house all high school students at a single campus. It is constructed on a floor plan that is a mirror image of the Magnolia High School built in 2001.

Proposition II (\$14,500,000) funded the construction of Magnolia Parkway Elementary on FM 1488; this campus was completed in August 2008. Proposition III (\$1,500,000) funded the construction of the Celeste G. Graves Educational Support Center, completed in November 2007, and an additional warehouse for textbooks completed in 2009 (MISD Minutes, September 8, 2004).

By naming several of the new campuses and other facilities constructed since 1994 in honor of individuals who had been significant in the history of Magnolia Independent School District, the district displayed a recognition of the heritage represented by these persons and an appreciation of their years of effort in serving the community and its children. Recognizing this, Graves asked to speak at the November 2004 board meeting during the audience participation portion of the agenda. Her statement is noted as follows:

Celeste Graves thanked the Board for considering the name of Tom R. Ellisor for the new elementary school, and detailed the many ways Mr. Ellisor was involved in education in Magnolia ISD from 1925–1950, as teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent. She also mentioned that over 40 letters had been sent to Mr. Holland requesting that a school be named after Mr. Ellisor (MISD Minutes, November 8, 2004).

According to Holland, “No one played a bigger part [than Ellisor] in the advancement of education in the Magnolia District” (Ross, 2004). Ellisor also was very involved with student activities according to Celeste Graves: “Although Ellisor was known to be a stern disciplinarian in the classroom, when there were parties, picnics, dances, and other events, ‘Mr. Tom’ was always chosen as a chaperone.” Ellisor had died in 1977, leaving one son who resides in Georgetown (Ross, 2004).

During the December 2004 board meeting, Superintendent Holland honored another employee who had been with the district for over 55 years:

Superintendent Michael Holland called Celeste Graves to the front of the room and read a brief biographical sketch regarding her service to Magnolia ISD. He then surprised her by making a recommendation the Board that they name the new education support center in her honor (MISD Minutes, December 13, 2004).

As noted above, the Graves Education Support Center was completed in November 2007.

Michael Holland’s contract was extended during the January 2009 board meeting; however, Holland announced his retirement at the conclusion of the next month’s board meeting (MISD Minutes, February 9, 2009). During the next month’s board meeting, Todd Stephens was named superintendent of Magnolia Independent School District (MISD Minutes, March 9, 2009).

Summary

During the period of 1980 to 2009, even within the context of its history of steady and continued growth, the Magnolia Independent School District experienced its largest-ever increase in student enrollment along with broadening changes in the demographic makeup of the student population. While the tax rollbacks in Montgomery County created a temporary time of disharmony, the district quickly recovered from the loss of tax revenue by the detachment of taxable land within The Woodlands to Conroe Independent School District. This sale was followed by a series of conservative voter bond elections to fund construction of campuses and other support facilities that were needed to accommodate the rapidly increasing enrollment. Additionally, specialized personnel were added in the latter years to facilitate the ESL/Bilingual and Special Programs that the new students and parents were in need of.

Perhaps it is significant that during this same period of accelerating growth, financial challenge, and change, the district began to make overt efforts to recognize its history, as evidenced by the naming of several facilities in honor of individuals who were important in the district's development. The overall stability the district experienced was due to many influential people in the community, including members of the board of trustees, school administrators, and staff members.

This study has reviewed these influential individuals, the growth of the district, and how the district began to change to meet the needs of the new population. In the final chapter, a summary of the most important points of the study will be given, along with suggestions for topics of future study.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Research Question: What Is the History of Magnolia Independent School District, and What Influential People and Events Have Shaped the District?

History

The schools in Magnolia, Texas began as four separate schools in 1893: the “Methodist school”, the “Grange school, ” the “Baptist school,” and the “Steger school” (Gayle, 1957). Beginning on January 1, 1912, these four schools consolidated into the Montgomery County Common School District #6 and held classes in a newly constructed building (*Conroe Courier*). The first graduating class consisted of six students (MISD, 2008). When enrollment grew to 245 in 1935, the Montgomery County Common School District #6 built a new building that has been in use continuously as of this writing (Graves 2004, p. 146).

As the district grew, so did the need for additional classroom space. The 1937 consolidation of schools in Montgomery County added the Decker Prairie School to Montgomery County School District #6. Growth occurring within the rest of the district also increased enrollment (Texas State Board of Education 1937, pp. 1006–1017).

Desiring more community control over local schools, voters within the boundaries of the area served by the Magnolia schools voted to become independent, authorizing the 1950 creation of the Magnolia Independent School District from what

had formerly been known as Montgomery County Common School District #6. At that time, when the district had a total enrollment of 432 students (Graves, 2004), voters elected MISD's first board of trustees (MISD, March 20, 1950).

Responding to federal mandates, the schools in Magnolia began integration of Black and White students in 1965; the school district was fully integrated by 1968. The district continued to grow through the 1960s and 1970s, and by 1983, Magnolia Independent School District had an enrollment of 3,200 students on three campuses consisting of a high school, a junior high school, and an elementary school.

In 1982, a proposed tax rate increase unsettled the financially conservative community. By January 1983, the voters of Magnolia Independent School District had mandated a tax rollback. Magnolia Independent School District was one of six taxable entities in Montgomery County that faced decreased funding during this period ("Tax Rates Discussed", 1983). This decrease in funding was instigated by and exacerbated a tendency toward fiduciary mistrust between the community and the school administration. Many programs were at risk of being cut ("Magnolia Parents Picket", 1983). However, over the following two years, all programs were reinstated. A significant portion of the funding needed for these program reinstatements was provided by payments received by MISD for ceding certain portions of the district's eastern areas to the rapidly developing planned community of The Woodlands; the community's developers found it desirable for as much of the community as possible to be served by the Conroe Independent School District.

Over the next seventeen years, Magnolia Independent School District grew at a steady pace. By the year 2000, the district was serving over 6,200 students and by 2009, the district had grown to 11,315 students on 15 campuses.

Influential People

Magnolia Independent School District has experienced the leadership of 14 superintendents, excluding interim superintendents. Each individual contributed to the development of the district. Notably, all of the district's superintendents and school board members were also members of the community's influential Lions Club, which was founded in 1956 (Graves, 2009). This organization would continue to be a political force in the community for many years to come.

Tom R. Ellisor served as the first principal and superintendent of schools during the early 1900s. Ellisor would continue as superintendent of schools until the district became independent in 1950. Ellisor would then serve as the district's tax assessor and collector for an additional two years. An elementary school was dedicated in his honor posthumously in 2007. According to Graves (2009), Ellisor was a stern disciplinarian who also demonstrated love for the students and made an impact on the lives of all students that were in the schools during his tenure.

Celeste Graves began her career as a student of Tom Ellisor. She would become the first superintendent's secretary for the district and would continue to hold this position until 1985. In 1985, after 55 years of service, Graves began working part-time. She was replaced by her daughter, Tarvah Graves McGinty, who followed in her mother's footsteps until her own retirement in 2006. At this writing, Graves continues to work for Magnolia Independent School District two days per week.

H. H. Swann served the students of Magnolia as the head boys' football coach, principal, and athletic director. The athletic complex at the present junior high school is named for him in honor of his dedicated service.

J. L. Lyon served as principal, assistant superintendent, and interim superintendent for Magnolia. After his death, an elementary school was dedicated in his name.

Cedric Smith was elected to the first school board and served for five years. Smith would serve again in the 1990s. Magnolia Independent School District dedicated Smith Elementary School in his honor. At the time of this writing, Cedric Smith is still active in Lions Club and many other community organizations (Smith, 2010).

Willie Williams was the principal at the Black campus in Magnolia and subsequently participated in the racial integration of the district, beginning in 1965. Williams assisted in making the transition a smooth one for all students. An elementary school was named after Williams.

David Hill would serve on the school board and as Constable of Precinct 5 in Montgomery County. As of this writing, Hill continues to serve the community as constable.

Malcom Purvis served several terms on the school board. Purvis was also the County Commissioner for the Magnolia area. Purvis died in 2000.

Tarvah McGinty served as the secretary to the superintendent of schools in Magnolia from 1985 to 2006 following her mother's tenure from 1950 to 1985. Her husband, Gayle "Taz" McGinty, served the students as a coach and an administrator.

The role of the superintendent's secretary lends itself to having both a broad and intimate vantage point on the operation of the school district and the various personalities involved. McGinty states:

When you are a superintendent's secretary, you really understand what a tough job it is to be a superintendent. So many parents, other administrators, board members, teachers, and others have their own personal agendas and needs, and they never really know about how a superintendent agonizes over the decisions he has to make. [They also may not be aware of all that] goes into making that decision. Several times, I have seen a superintendent pace the floor while telling me all the different sides to a problem and saying how hard it is to tell which is the right decision to make. I have often been asked for my input because of having grown up in Magnolia and having an understanding of local feelings. We had many discussions involving small-town politics, local grudges and/or grievances, individual points of view, and other things (McGinty, 2010).

McGinty, her husband, and her mother have all played an integral part in the formation of the district.

**Research Question: What Were the Causes of Growth Periods
in the Magnolia Independent School District, and
What Were the Effects of Such Growth?**

From the earliest beginnings of the Magnolia schools, transportation to and from nearby urban areas set the stage for growth. First the railroads and, later, the road and highway systems provided the basis and mechanism for a process of urbanization, as persons moving into the greater Houston metropolitan area began to populate the city's developing and expanding suburbs. This had direct implications for the student population in Magnolia Independent School District.

From three small schools in the early 1900s to the 15 individual campuses in use presently, Magnolia Independent School District has experienced tremendous growth. Growing from 113 students in 1927 (Gayle, 1957) to 11,315 students in 2009 (MISD, 2008) has not occurred without periods of organizational and personal discomfort. The largest period of enrollment increase was during the school years from 1999 to 2007, when enrollment increased from 6,501 students to 11,315 students (approximately 43%).

The district expanded with the annexation of the Oklahoma community during the school consolidation movement mandated by the Texas State Board of Education in 1940. However, the largest influence on the growth of the district was during the 1999–2009 period with the expansion of The Woodlands, surrounding highway improvements, and development of new residential subdivisions within the school district driven by the northward and westward expansion of the Houston suburban area (MISD, 2008). This period was typified by large bond elections and rapid construction of facilities to keep pace with the influx of families enrolling children in the schools of Magnolia.

The growth in enrollment summarized above necessitated, in addition to changes in physical facilities, reallocation of staffing for administration and curriculum and instruction. According to McGinty, when she first became the secretary to the superintendent, there were three assistant superintendents (see Appendix H: Superintendents of Magnolia Independent School District 1984). The structure changed to meet the demands of the changing curriculum (see Appendix H: Superintendents of Magnolia Independent School District 1982, Appendix J: Organization Charts for

Magnolia Independent School District). “Over the next several years, the district dropped to only one assistant superintendent and added numerous directors” (McGinty, 2010). In 2000 the curriculum staffing again faced a needed shift to meet the needs of the rapidly growing district. According to assistant superintendent Clydene Freeman, many curriculum directors and specialists were brought into the schools during this period to assist with the growing and changing population. According to Michael Daniel, director of personnel, the district employs 1,661 persons, 1,171 of whom are campus staff. Magnolia Independent School District has a student-teacher ratio of 14.2 to 1 (Daniel, 2010).

**Research Question: How Did the District’s Ethnic and Socioeconomic
Groups Affect Its Growth?**

The integration movement of the 1960s affected the schools in Magnolia, not because of resistance to racial mixing in the schools, but because of community complacency (O. Ross, 2009; Graves, 2009; Fulton, 2009; Smith, 2010). With the community perception of equal facilities at the Black and White campuses, the desire for a “better education” was a moot point, according to Ross, Graves, Fulton, and Smith. The schools were integrated, however, because of the necessity for compliance with federal mandates. This was accomplished by creating a middle school campus at what had been the Black school, thereby creating one scholastic path for all students.

However, the most significant influence on growth has been exerted by the district’s increase in Hispanic students. Magnolia schools served 218 Hispanic students in 1990 (6.3% of the total student population; see Figure 3); This number increased to 2,480 (22% of the total student population; see Figure 3) in 2008 (MISD, 2008). District

officials Clydene Freeman and Elizabeth Torres cite various employment trends to explain the increase. To meet the needs of this expanding portion of the student demographic, several changes occurred. According to assistant superintendent Clydene Freeman, “There has definitely been growth in all areas of our population, but the growth that has impacted us the most has been in our Hispanic and bilingual population and our low socioeconomic population.” Freeman further states that as the district grew, the English-as-a-second-language (ESL) program was not meeting the needs of the students. In 2004, a bilingual coordinator was hired specifically to meet these needs. Elizabeth Torres, Director of Bilingual Education, states that the district has added the bilingual program at two additional campuses since 2004. The enrollment of students identified as having limited English proficiency student has been increasing at a steady 10% annual rate (Freeman, 2010; Torres, 2010).

The Hispanic population of the district is centered in the southern part of the district. As a result, the majority of the bilingual classes are located in the elementary schools in this same area (Torres, 2010). Since this area of the district is also typified by a population mostly in the lower socioeconomic rankings, many of these campuses are also Title I campuses.

By contrast, the northern and eastern portions of the district tend to contain higher socioeconomic groups, especially in the eastern areas nearest The Woodlands. In the western portion of the district, the traditional rural-small town demographic makeup, typified by the community of Magnolia, proper, and its surrounding areas, provides the dominant population.

The wide variety of these different populations being served by the same district creates challenges for educators and administrators. Because of the different approaches required—especially for the bilingual programs serving the ESL population—these demographic developments have posed and will continue to pose challenges for the district.

Items for Further Study

From this research, there are three items that warrant further study. These items are, a comparison study of the growth in Magnolia Independent School District with districts that have exhibited similar growth patterns, curricular and instructional implications of fiscal policy within the district, and a comparison of the facility usage of the district with other districts exhibiting similar demographics and student population. These three items will be addressed individually.

Comparison of Growth in Magnolia Independent School District with Districts Exhibiting Similar Growth Patterns

As urbanization continues in many communities in the state, with suburban areas growing to encompass formerly rural areas on the outskirts of metropolitan areas, more and more school districts will face the need for transition from rural contexts to more complex educational systems. Study of districts similar to MISD that have already dealt with this phenomenon could provide valuable reference points for educators and other civic leaders who will need to guide their communities and schools through similar processes in the future. The present study, in combination with a growing body of such research, could be of significant assistance to educators and community leaders for many years to come.

***Curricular and Instructional Implications of District Fiscal Policy in Magnolia
Independent School District***

While the present study has noted certain important changes that took place during the historical evolution of Magnolia Independent School District, it has been beyond the scope of this historical descriptive narrative to evaluate and correlate district fiscal policy directly with changes in instructional needs, objectives, and procedures. Those concerned with curriculum and instruction, both within MISD and in other school districts exhibiting similar growth and demographic characteristics, could be helped by understanding more precisely how changing district financial practices, school funding, and fiscal policies impact priorities, policies, and decisions about changing curricular and instructional needs.

***Comparison of Magnolia Independent School District Facility Use with Other
Districts Exhibiting Similar Demographics and Student Populations***

Student population has a direct impact on facility need and utilization. This has been dramatically illustrated in the present study, in which the growth in Magnolia Independent School District from small, single-room, rural schoolhouses to a complex network of facilities comprising 15 campuses, along with various support facilities, has been noted and detailed. Study of school districts that have faced similar challenges could provide useful comparisons and contrasts for future educational and community leaders whose schools are facing or expect to face similar challenges brought about by urbanization and growing school enrollments.

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1986–1987.

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1987–1988.

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1988--1990.

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1990–1992.

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1994–1995.

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Magnolia Independent School District, *Board of trustees meeting minutes, Vol. XXII*,
1998–2001.

Magnolia Independent School District, *Board of trustees meeting minutes, Vol. XXIII*,
2001–2002.

Magnolia Independent School District, *Board of trustees meeting minutes, Vol. XXIV*,
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
MISD AUTHORIZATION FOR STUDY

**MAGNOLIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

P.O. BOX 88
MAGNOLIA, TX 77353-0088
FAX 281-252-2514

TODD STEPHENS
Superintendent
281-356-3571

CLYDENE FREEMAN
Assistant Superintendent
281-356-3571

August 3, 2009

Mr. R. Matthew Clark
25571 Magnolia Pines Drive
Magnolia, Texas 77355

Dear Mr. Clark,

I have reviewed your request to conduct research involving past and present teachers, administrators and trustees, and documentation relating to the history of Magnolia Independent School District. Your study will examine the relationship between school, schooling, and socio-political powers of the community through the historical study of Magnolia ISD. I understand that the potential risks associated with participation in the study are minimal and that individual participation is achieved on a voluntary basis.

The Magnolia Independent School District grants you permission to conduct the research study presented in your request during the 2009-2010 school year. If you have any additional questions or concerns associated with your study, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Todd Stephens, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Magnolia Independent School District

APPENDIX B

MISD ORAL HISTORY PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT

Interviewee Release Form

I, _____, do herein permanently give, convey, and assign to R. Matthew Clark, which is currently in possession of my interview consisting of the history of Magnolia Schools. In so doing I understand that my interview will be made available to researchers and may be quoted from, published, or broadcast in any medium that is deemed appropriate.

In making this gift, I fully understand that I am conveying all legal title and literary property rights which I have or may be deemed to have in my interview as well as my rights, title and interest in any copyright which may be secured under the laws now or later in force and effect in the United States of America. My conveyance of copyright encompasses the exclusive rights of: reproduction, distribution, preparation of derivative works, public performance, public display as well as all renewals and extensions.

I accept the interview for the inclusion in the study of the history of Magnolia Schools.

Signature of Interviewee

Date

Signature of Interviewer

APPENDIX C
SAMPLE MISD ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONS

Teacher Interview Questions

Please state your name.

Degree from?

Certification?

Tell me about how you came to Magnolia.

What was the beginning teacher salary in Magnolia?

What were the schools like when you began teaching?

What were the schools like when you retired?

How long did you teach at the Black school?

Why did you leave?

What do you remember about working for Mr. Williams

Were there any other office staff?

What were the class size?

Multiple level grouping?

Curriculum?

Parent support?

Community support?

Most memorable events as a teacher?

As a staff member?

As a person?

Typical day at Black school?

Other school?

Comparison between the two?

Difference in curriculum between Black school and

White school?

Describe the process of integration for the students?

For the staff?

Community reactions to integration?

Comments about the schools in Magnolia of the past?

Of the present?

Class Discipline, how was it handled?

Who created the curriculum?

Staff development/workshops?

Communication between parents and teachers.

Role and impact of athletic competition

Hours of the average day

Lunch

Mentor teachers, were there any?

Bulidings the schools were in?

Do they still exist?

Superintendents. Can you tell me about the different ones that were in Magnolia?

Tom Ellisor

Jack Boyd?

Jack McIntosh?

Charles Tergerson?

Kenneth Pye?

Patrick Brown (Interim)?

James Baker?

James Lyon?

Les Tucker?

Howard Murchison?

Bob Tilley (Interim)?

Steve Jones?

Richard Capps?

Anything that I have forgotten to ask or that you believe would be important for someone to know about the history of the schools in Magnolia?

APPENDIX D
AREA/DISTANCES OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS, 1941

Independent Districts	Area in Square Miles	Percent of County	Miles from County Seat
Conroe	306.3	28.88	County Seat
Montgomery	203.37	19.18	17
Willis	126.74	11.95	8
Total ISD	636.41	60.01	
Common Districts			
Bobbin	22.6	2.13	22
Fostoria	2.8	0.26	18
Magnolia	122.65	11.57	23
New Caney	85.58	8.07	21
Oklahoma	36.6	3.47	17
Security	46.44	4.38	13
Total CSD	316.67	29.88	

Source Blackman, 1941

APPENDIX E
MAP OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS IN
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, TEXAS, 1941

APPENDIX F

HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF MAGNOLIA SCHOOL BUILDINGS



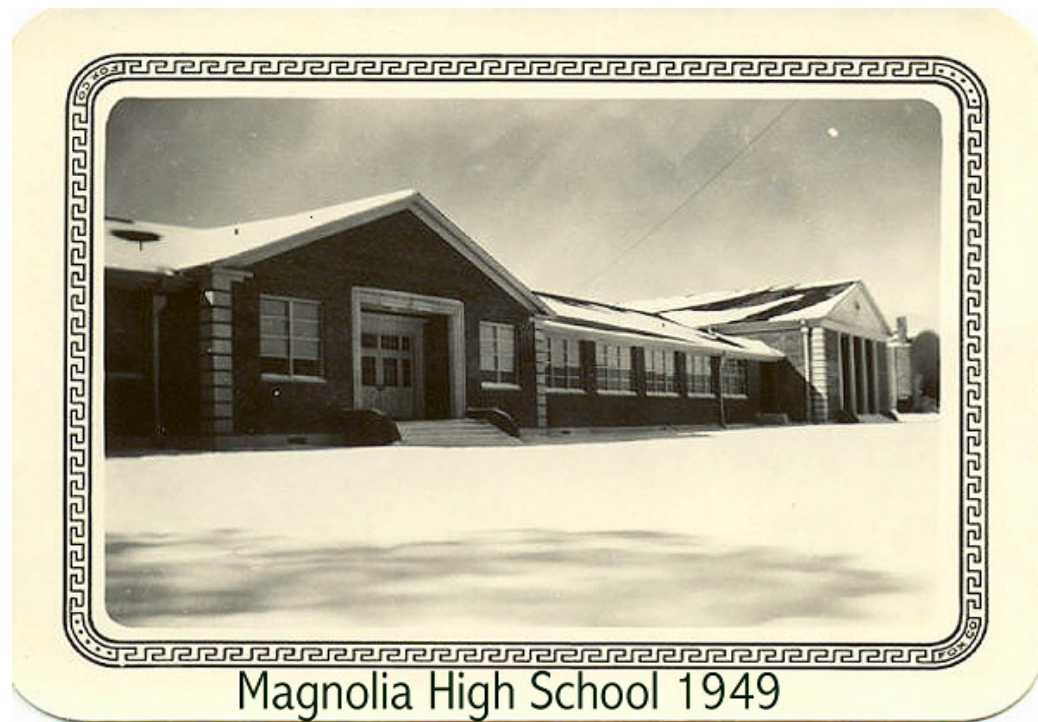
Building for Montgomery County Common School District #6, 1927;

photo by J. Gayle.



High School, Montgomery County Common School District #6, 1937;

photo by J. Gayle.



Magnolia High School, 1949 (Montgomery County Common School District #6);

Photo from *Magnolian*, 1950.

APPENDIX G
SCHOOL BOARD TRUSTEES OF MAGNOLIA INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL DISTRICT

ABNEY, TOM	1950
ADAMS, EUGENE	1965–1968
ADDISON, GLENN	1997–
ASHLEY, BARBARA	1979–1981
ASHLEY, LARRY	1975–1976
AUSTIN, RAY	1968–1971
BARNARD, BOB	1980–1983
BELL, CECIL	2004–
BORGNER, NICK	1982–1984
BRANTLEY, FRED	1951–1956
BRAUTIGAM, W.C.	1950–1954
BUCKALEW, L.A.	1950–1956
CAMERON, KATHERYN	1980–1983
CARRAWAY, DEMPSEY	1959–1963
CHANDLER, ED	1950
CREWS, STEVE	2007–
DAMOUTH, E.J.	1963–1967
DAVIDSON, PHILLIP	1973–1978
DEAN, W.A.	1950
DEAN, W.E.	1951–1954/1969–1970
DORRIS, MARVIN	1956–1965
DUFFEY, R.E.	1957–1963
DUNN, AMOS	1969–1973
ELKIN, SHIRLEY	1987–1988
ELLISON, JIM	1957–1961
EVANS, MORRIS	1956–1963
FOUGERON, LELAND	1980–1983
GROVES, CECIL	1950–1958
HANKS, HARRY	1954–1957
HILL, DAVID	1979–1982
HOSFORD, G.B.	1962–1964
JOLLY, P.J.	1957–1962
JOHNSON, RAYMOND	1965–1974
KARR, AUSTIN	1977–1979
KELLY, PRESTON	1965–1967/1975–1983
KERR, ANNETTE	1996–2004

LEE, W.T.	1964–1967
LLOYD, A.E.	1950–1956
LLOYD, A.J.	1961–1966
LONER, GEORGE	1986–1988
LYON, J.L.	1985–1992
MCDOUGLE, G.W.	1963–1966/1967–1969
MCNULTY, CARL	1978–1981
MCVEY, JEANETTE	1983–1988
MILLER, DEBORAH ROSE	2007–
MOCK, JOE CLIFF	1974–1980
MONTGOMERY, BOBBY	1998–2007
MURPHY, PAT	1989–1994
NICHOLS, JOHN	1972–1975
O'NEAL, BRENT	1999–
PARKER, MARCY	1989–1994
PARSLEY, J.A.	1972
POWELL, JAMES	1983–1986
PURVIS, MALCOM	1966–1971/1974–1980
PURVIS, NANCY	1988
RICKETT, ALTA	1987–1998
RILEY, CHARLIE	2005–
ROBERTS, JIMMIE N.	1983–1984
ROBERTSON, W.G.	1973–1979
ROLLINS, JOHNNY	1982–1992
ROSS, G.W.	1950–1951
ROYE, RICHARD	1955–1957
RUDY, VICKY	1998–2005
SALMON, RUSSELL	1971
SATTERWHITE, ALLEN	1970–1973
SHERWIN, GENE	1985–1986
SMITH, CEDRIC	1950–1955/1987-1997
SMITH, O.S.	1950–1951
THOMPSON, BILLY	1997–
TOWNSEND, DON	1967–1979
TOWNSEND, DOUGLAS	1984–1987
WILSON, HELEN	1981–1988
WINFORD, FRANK	1998–2007
VAJA, BILLY	1974–1979
YANCEY, DICK	1955–1958

YANCEY, WAYNE
YOUNGBLOOD, ELLIS

1967-1970
1966-1969/1970-1972

Taken from MISD Board Minutes, 1950-2009

APPENDIX H
SUPERINTENDENTS OF MAGNOLIA
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Superintendents of Magnolia Independent School District

John Wesley “Jack” Boyd	July 1, 1950 – June 30, 1951
Jack McIntosh	July 1, 1951 – June 30, 1958
Charles J. Tergerson	July 1, 1958 – June 30, 1969
Kenneth Pye	July 1, 1969 – January 31, 1974
Patrick Brown (Interim)	February 1, 1974 – June 30, 1974
James T. Baker	July 1, 1974 – April 18, 1980
James L. Lyon (Interim)	April 18, 1980 – June 30, 1980
Leslie Tucker	July 1, 1980 – June 30, 1983
Howard Murchison, Jr.	June 30, 1983 – March 24, 1986
M. R. “Bob” Tilley (Interim)	March 24, 1986 – June 30, 1986
Dr. Steve Jones	July 1, 1986 – June 30, 1989
Dr. Richard Capps	July 1, 1989 – June 30, 1992
Derrith Welch	July 1, 1992 – June 30, 1999
Michael Holland	July 1, 1999 – June 30, 2009
Dr. Todd Stephens	July 1, 2009 –

Taken from MISD Board Minutes, 1950-2008

APPENDIX I
MAGNOLIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Student Development Goals

Magnolia Independent School District

Whether apparently visible or not, each school district lives in a symbiotic relationship with its community and surrounding area. The educational programs are tied, at least indirectly, to the ideas, attitudes, and desires of the public; and so the educational course plotted should provide academic, vocational, and social skills necessary to supply a continuous demand for new and productive citizenry.

It is the goal of the Magnolia Independent School district, and the responsible duty of its employees to provide a comprehensive educational atmosphere more directly aligning itself with student needs correlated to specific individual skills, attitudes, and insight; and when these conditions conducive to educational attainment are met the student shall achieve:

1. basic academic skills,
 - a. enabling the student to achieve competence in the traditionally accepted fundamental skills, such as reading, writing, and arithmetic
 - b. allowing expression of thoughts, ideas, and feelings orally and in writing
 - c. utilizing written and verbal instructions as well as understanding and practicing good listening habits
 - d. displaying the capacity for self-discipline, the ability to work independently and with others, and the ability to follow directions and profit by mistakes
 - e. achieving the understandings and skills requisite to entering college, a vocational career, or an advanced occupational training program
 - f. providing a positive attitude toward school and toward learning as an ongoing process through life;

2. fundamental knowledge and skills for economic and occupational competency through logical thinking,
 - a. developing a positive attitude toward work
 - b. exhibiting the ability to use information and counseling services related to the selection of a job
 - c. demonstrating the ability to accept job responsibility
 - d. developing awareness of the skills and abilities required for a wide range of occupations
 - e. developing the flexibility to change occupations
 - f. developing competence in the application of economic knowledge to the management of his personal affairs
 - g. understanding the workings of the American free enterprise system
 - h. investing available resources to produce additional resources for himself and the system
 - i. working to produce a product, a service, or ideas of value to society
 - j. developing an understanding toward checking, investments, and loan services of financial institutions;
3. fundamental understanding and appreciation of citizenship,
 - a. developing an understanding and respect for the rights and property of all citizens
 - b. developing a respect for authority and laws of our society
 - c. building an understanding of the responsibility that goes with equality, freedom and self-determination
 - d. acquiring and understanding of the various political and economic systems in our world
 - e. understanding the importance of working within "the System" to help bring about desired and needed reforms;
4. a workable balance of physiological and environmental health and worthy use of leisure time,
 - a. helping each student acquire the basic knowledge and skills to be competent socially and economically in our society

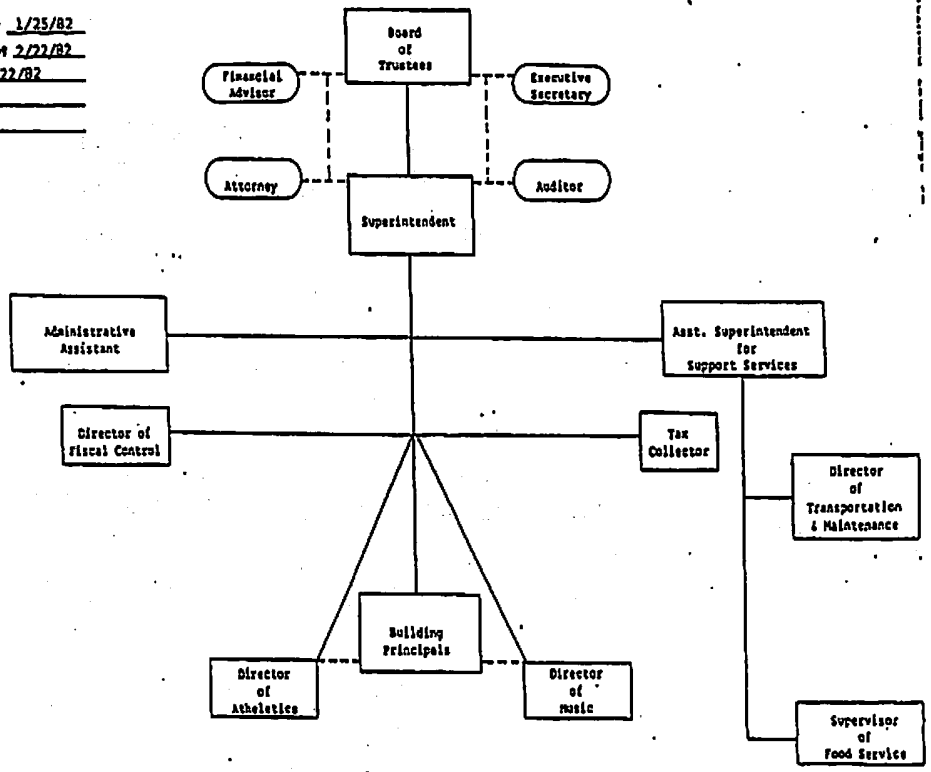
- b. helping each student to understand and to prepare for gainful employment in our economic system
 - c. gaining knowledge and appreciation for our American heritage and becoming responsible citizens in our Democratic Society
 - d. acquiring knowledge and values of health, safety, and conservation of our environment
 - e. accumulating knowledge and appreciation of fine arts
 - f. developing moral and ethical standards for personal conduct
 - g. determining wise use of leisure time;
5. an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences,
- a. absorbing a knowledge of a variety of cultural art forms (music, literature, drama, etc...)
 - b. developing an understanding and interest in bilingualism
 - c. seeking a mutual ground for cooperation in ecology and education, between cultural groups
 - d. demonstrating appreciation of various cultures' right to establish interdependence within a national sense of unity
 - e. individually achieving an effective understanding of the fundamentals of humanity in helping themselves as well as others;
6. competency in personal and social skills,
- a. demonstrating respect and appreciation for the uniqueness of individuals and their contributions to society
 - b. exhibiting a concern for the safety and well-being of others
 - c. actively participating in activities designed to improve life for self and others
 - d. reflecting evidence of purpose and direction in life
 - e. exemplifying a positive self-image, exhibiting self-confidence, and practicing self-discipline in daily routines
 - f. accepting responsibility for own decisions and actions
 - g. exhibiting a concern for moral, ethical, and spiritual values and for the application of such values to life situations.

Taken from MISD Board Minutes, 1978

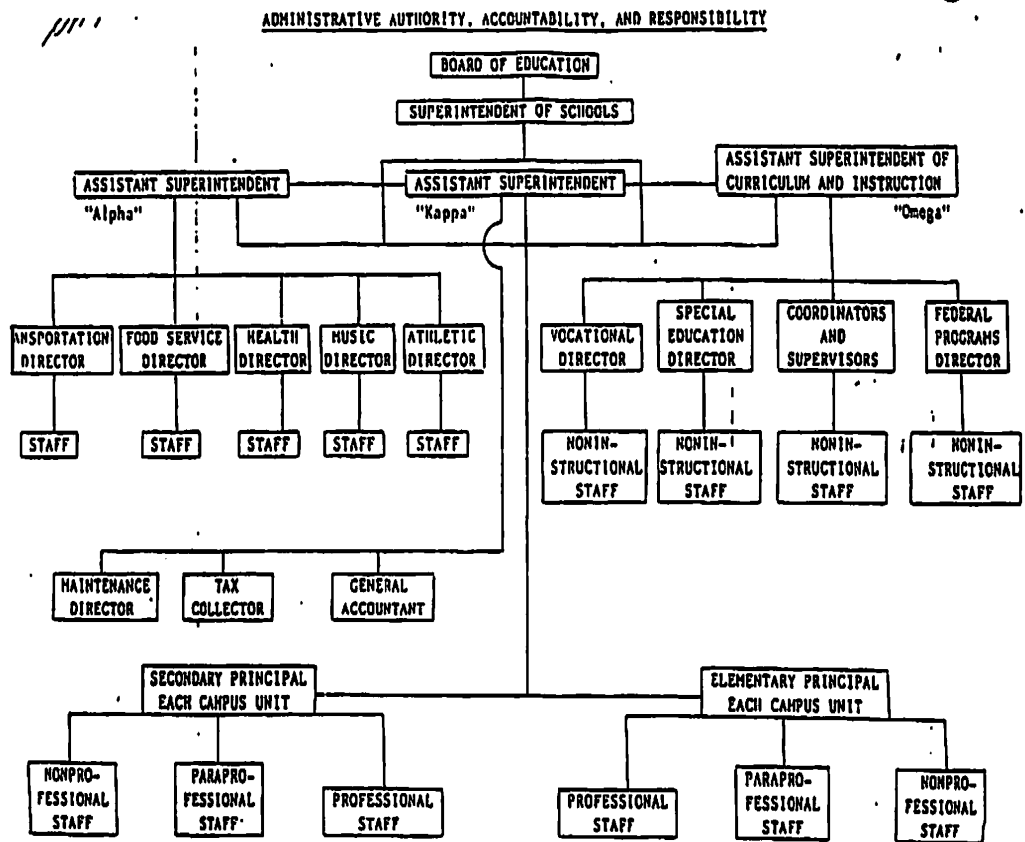
APPENDIX J
ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS FOR MAGNOLIA
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Statement of Policy
(Board of Trustees)
First Reading 1/25/82
Second Reading 2/22/82
Adopted 2/22/82
Amended _____
Amended _____

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART MAGNOLIA I.S.D.

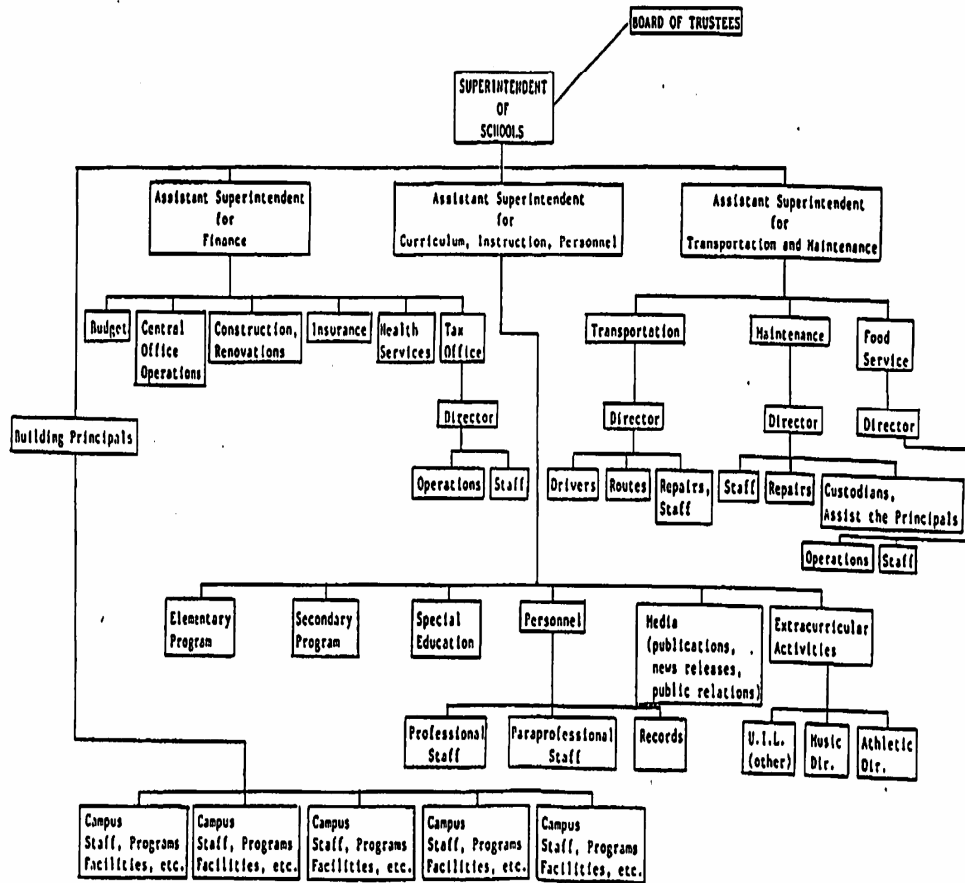


MISD, 1982



MISD, 1984

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION - MAGNOLIA I.S.D.

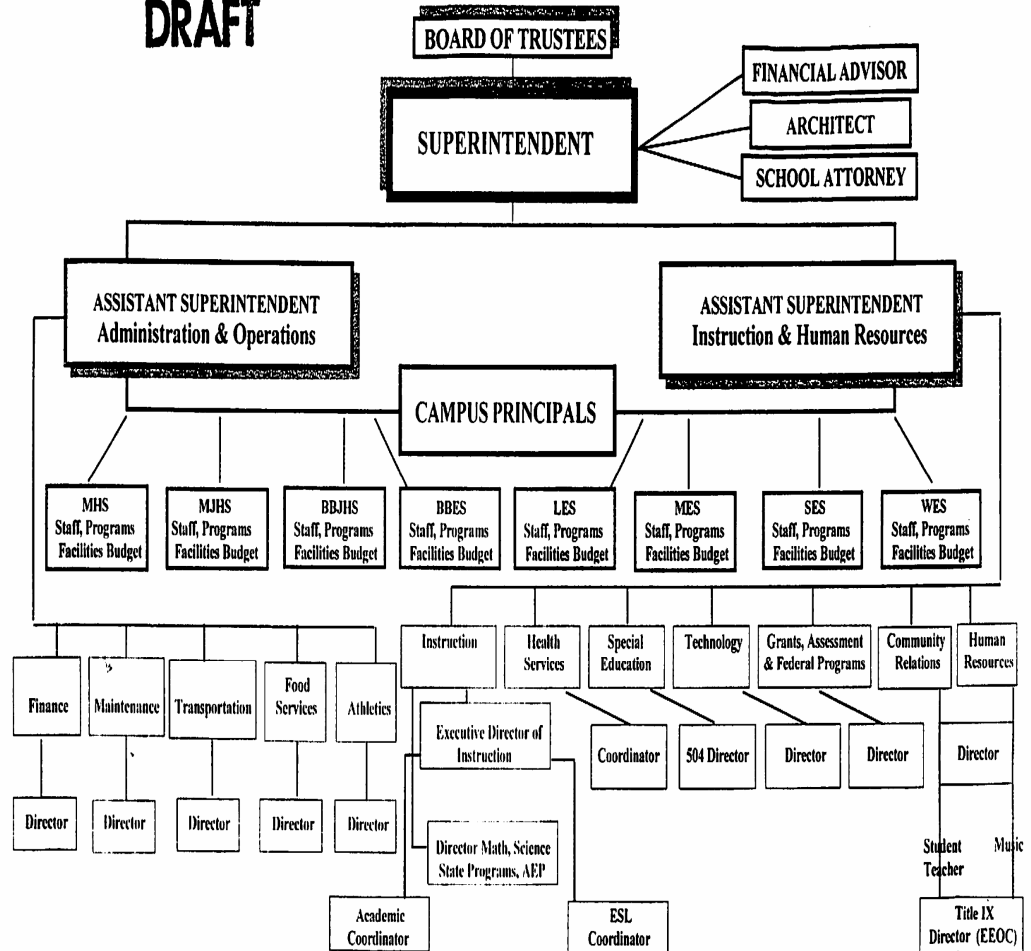


Revised September, 1986
 Dr. Steve Jones,
 Superintendent

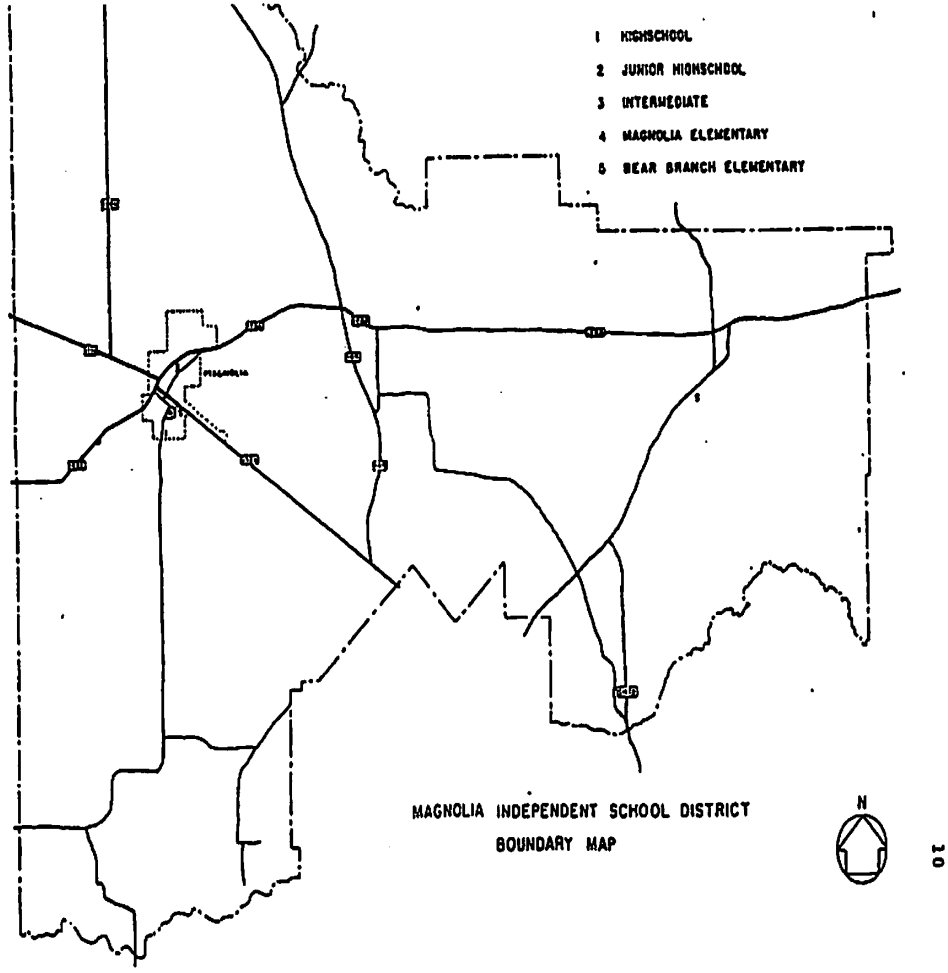
MAGNOLIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

09/27/2000

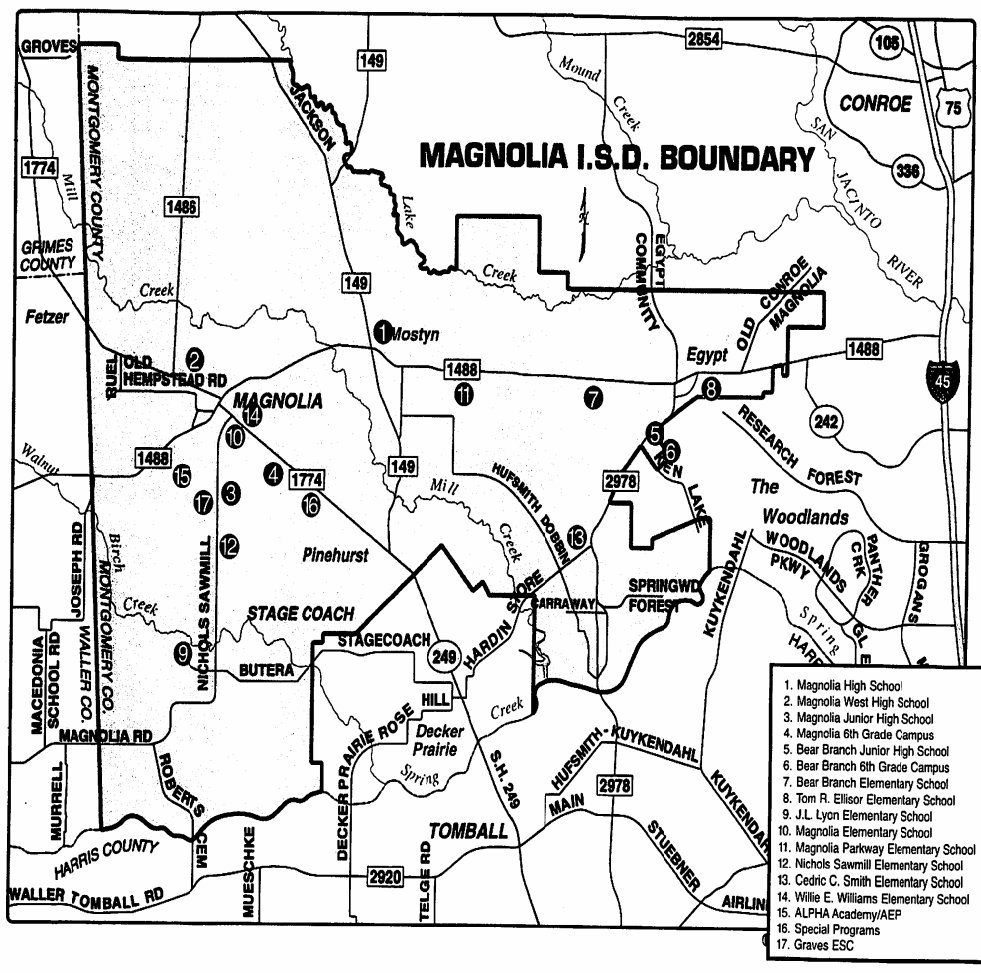
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APPENDIX K
HISTORICAL AND CURRENT BOUNDARIES,
MAGNOLIA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT



MISD, 1980



MISD, 2008

VITA

Name: Robert Matthew Clark

Address: 25571 Magnolia Pines Drive
Magnolia, Texas 77355

Email Address: rmattclark@sbcglobal.net

Education: B.A., English, Sam Houston State University,
Huntsville, Texas, 1990

M.Ed., Educational Administration, Sam Houston State
University, Huntsville, Texas, 1995

Ph.D., Curriculum and Instruction, Texas A&M University,
College Station, Texas 2010

Professional Experience: 15 years Public School Administrator
5 years Public School Teacher
6 years Educator Preparation Teacher

Professional Educational Positions: Director of Student Services
High School Principal
Elementary School Administrator
Educator Preparation Teacher
High School Teacher

Recent Presentations: *Magnolia 6th Grade Campus, a Historical Perspective*,
Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest
History of Education Society, Chicago, Il., October 10,
2008.

*Climbing through the Window of the Classroom: A look
at Alternative Certification Candidates*, Paper presented at
the Annual Meeting of the Curriculum and Pedagogy
Conference , Decatur, GA., October 23, 2008.

*The View of a Graduate Student Mentoring through a
Cognitive Developmental Lens*, Paper presented at the
Annual Meeting of the Curriculum and Pedagogy
Conference, Decatur, GA., October 24, 2008.