

September 27, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: RONALD BLOCKER
Superintendent

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Deputy Superintendent

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Education Services

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Program Services

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Data Analysis and Reporting

SUBJECT: Magnet Program Transfers effects on Achievement and Enrollment

Orange County Public Schools has an active Magnet School Program. Students are allowed to transfer to high schools across the district that have Magnet Programs which align with their interests. The purpose of this study was to examine the net effects of Magnet Program Student Transfers on enrollment and achievement at both host and donor schools. In other words, if there were no Magnet Program transfers what would the enrollment and achievement be like at schools across the district?

Research Questions:

- What was the net effect on enrollment of Magnet Program transfers in and out?
- Did Magnet Program transfers affect the percent of students achieving Level 3 on Math and Reading and 4 on Writing FCAT's?
- Did Magnet Program transfers affect the Mean GPA for the buildings?

Data

For the purpose of this study, achievement was defined as:

- FCAT Math 2002, percent of students who achieved a Level of 3 or better
- FCAT Reading 2002, percent of students who achieved a Level of 3 or better
- FCAT Writing 2002, percent of students who achieved a Level of 4 or better
- Cumulative unweighted GPA

There are three (3) student categories to consider.

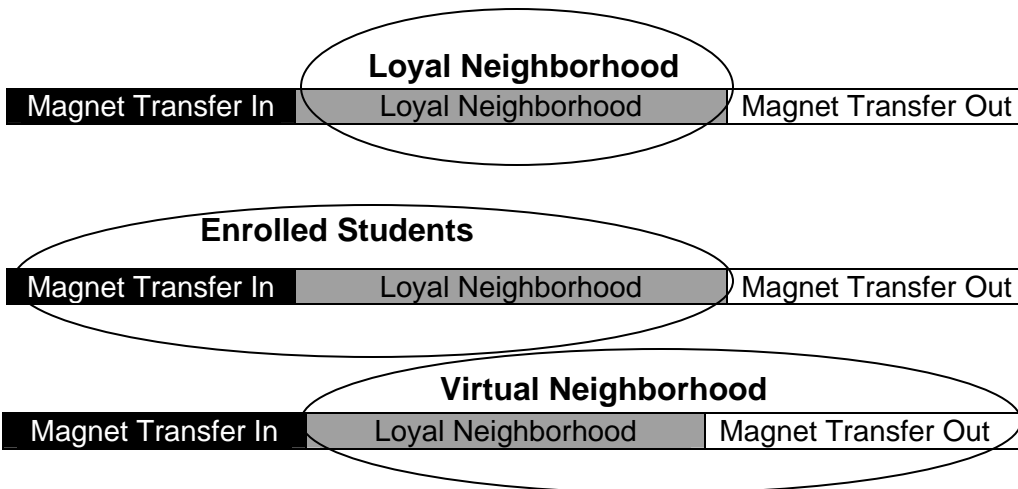
1. **Transfer In** -- Students who transfer into a school to attend a Magnet Program
2. **Loyal Neighborhood** -- Students who reside in the zoned neighborhood *and* attend the zoned neighborhood school
3. **Transfer Out** -- Students who transfer out of school they would attend based on their residence to attend a Magnet Program in another school

The three (3) student categories are graphically represented.



For the purpose of this study we combined the three (3) student categories into three (3) configurations.

1. Loyal Neighborhood School – live there attend there
2. Enrolled Students – attend there live there or live elsewhere
3. Virtual Neighborhood School – live there attend there or attend elsewhere



Loyal Neighborhood School -- live there attend there

The Loyal Neighborhood School **includes** only those students who **live** in the zoned neighborhood *and* **attend** the neighborhood school. The Loyal Neighborhood School **excludes both** students who **transfer in** and those who **transfer out** to attend a Magnet Program.

Enrolled Students -- attend there, live there or live elsewhere

Enrolled Students include all students enrolled at a host school at the time of testing. This **includes** the Loyal Neighborhood Schools students plus those who **transfer in** for a Magnet Program. Enrolled Students **exclude** those students who **transfer out** to attend a Magnet Program elsewhere. These results are used by the State for accountability reports, including school grades

Virtual Neighborhood School -- live there, attend there or attend elsewhere

The Virtual Neighborhood School includes students who are or would have been students if the school were strictly a neighborhood school. The virtual Neighborhood School includes the Loyal Neighborhood students and also includes those who **transferred out** to attend a Magnet Program at another school. The Virtual Neighborhood School **excludes** students who **transfer in** to participate in a Magnet Program.

Investigation

All of the OCPS high schools were included in the study.

On the following pages 4-8, there are charts showing findings of the study. The schools are listed in order of their FCAT Reading Scores from low (top of page) to high (bottom of page). This means that schools with a lower percent of their students achieving a 3 or above on FCAT Reading are at the top of the charts while schools with higher scores are at the bottom of the charts.

On each of the following charts, schools are compared in each of the three configurations:

- Enrolled Students
- Loyal Neighborhood
- Virtual Neighborhood

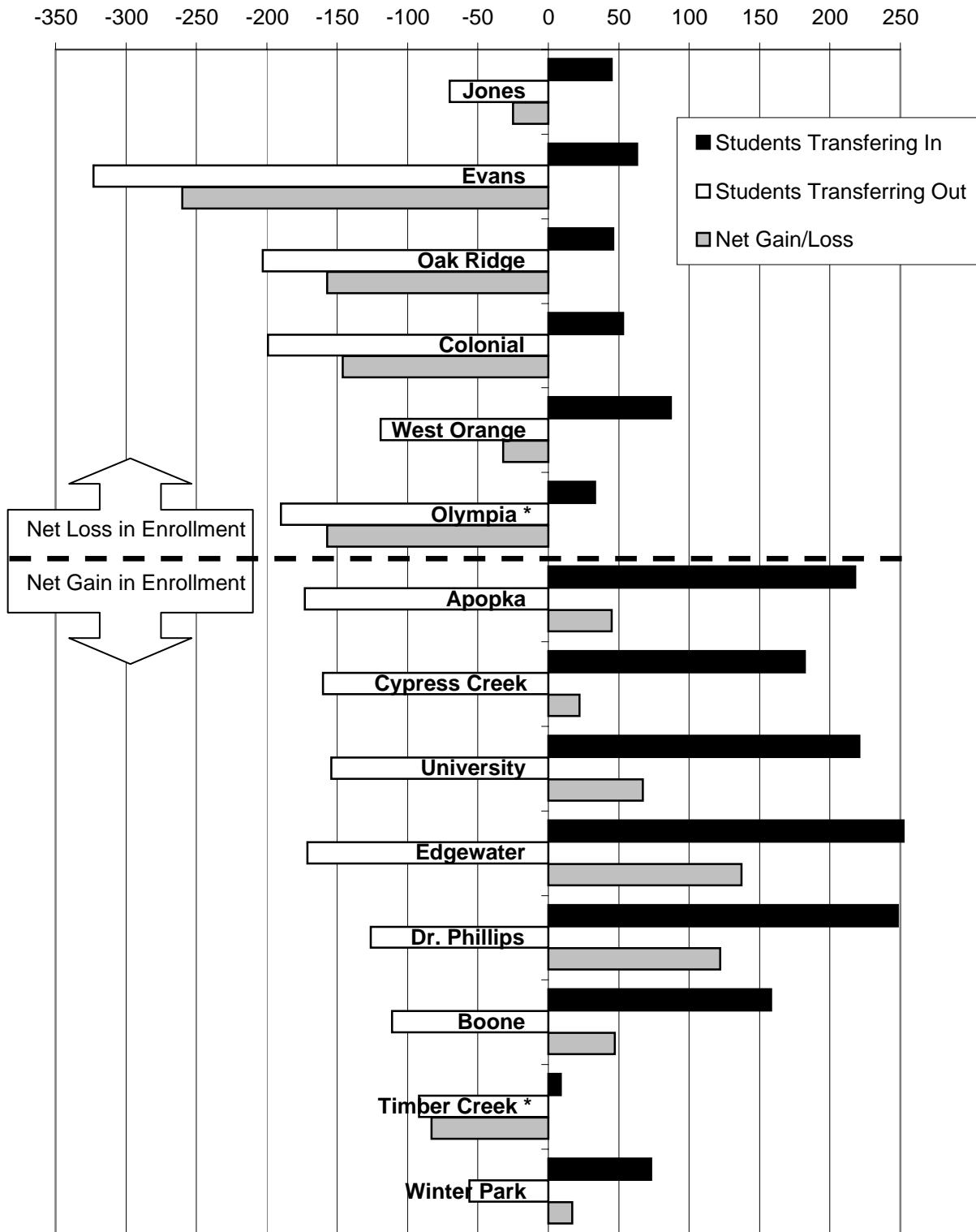
On page 4 the three configurations are compared for effects on enrollment at each school:

On pages 5-8 the three configurations are compared for the following academic indicators:

- FCAT Reading percent of students at level 3 or above
- FCAT Math percent of students at level 3 or above
- FCAT Writing percent of students at level 4 or above
- GPA Mean unweighted cumulative GPA

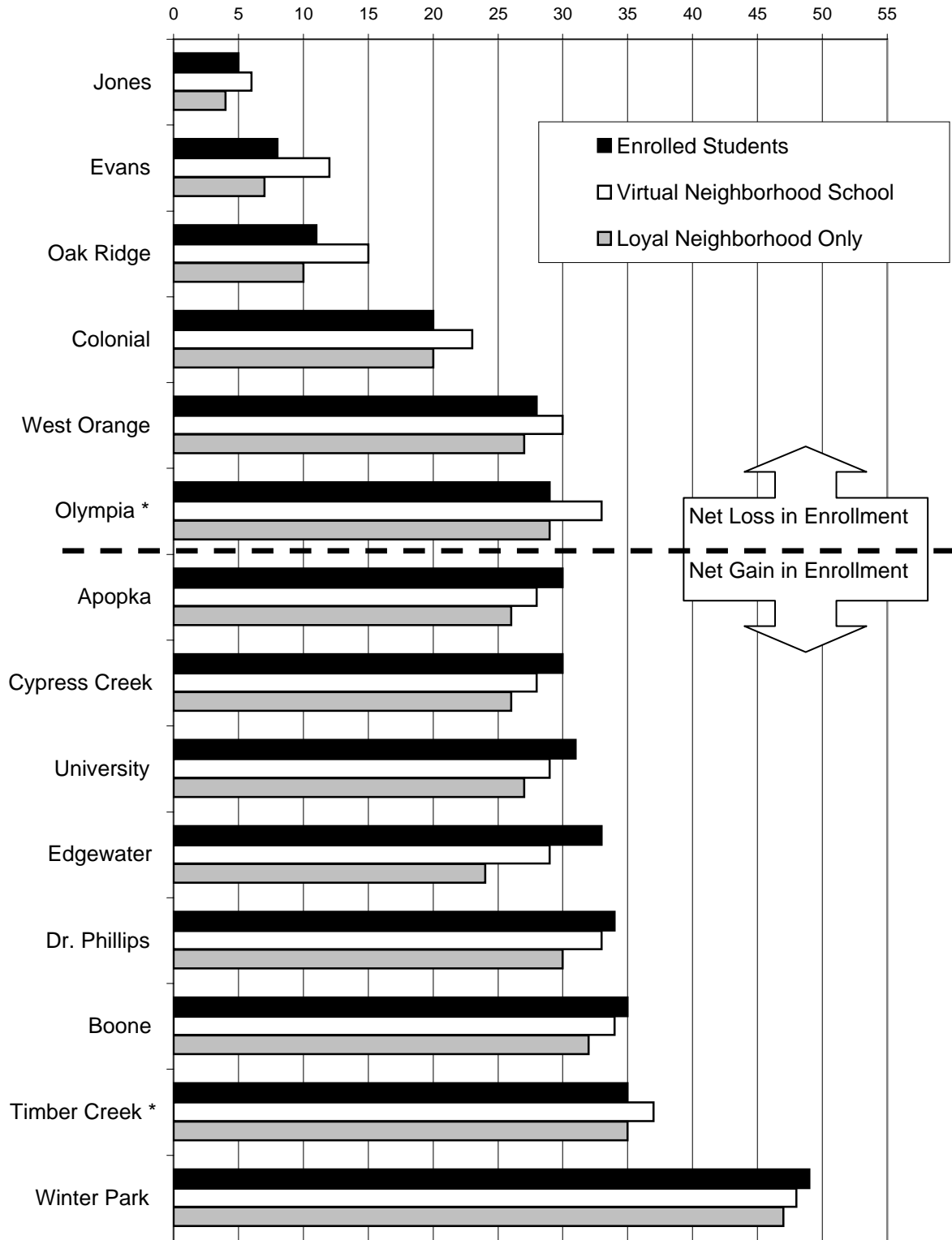
Results and conclusions follow the charts on page 8.

Magnet Transfer Study Number of Students Transferring in and Out 2002



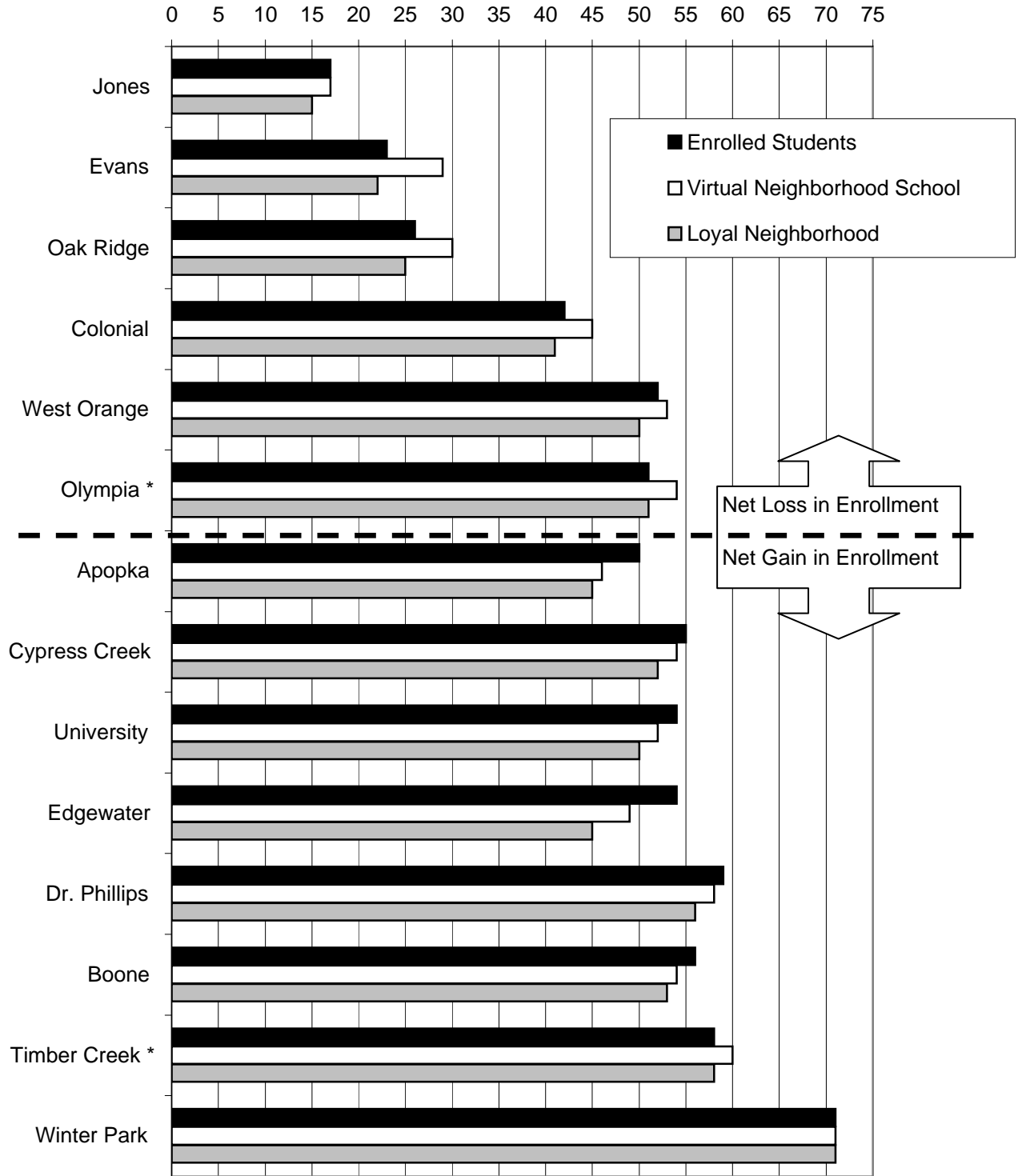
* No magnet program

Magnet Transfer Study FCAT Reading 2002 Percent of Students 3 and Above



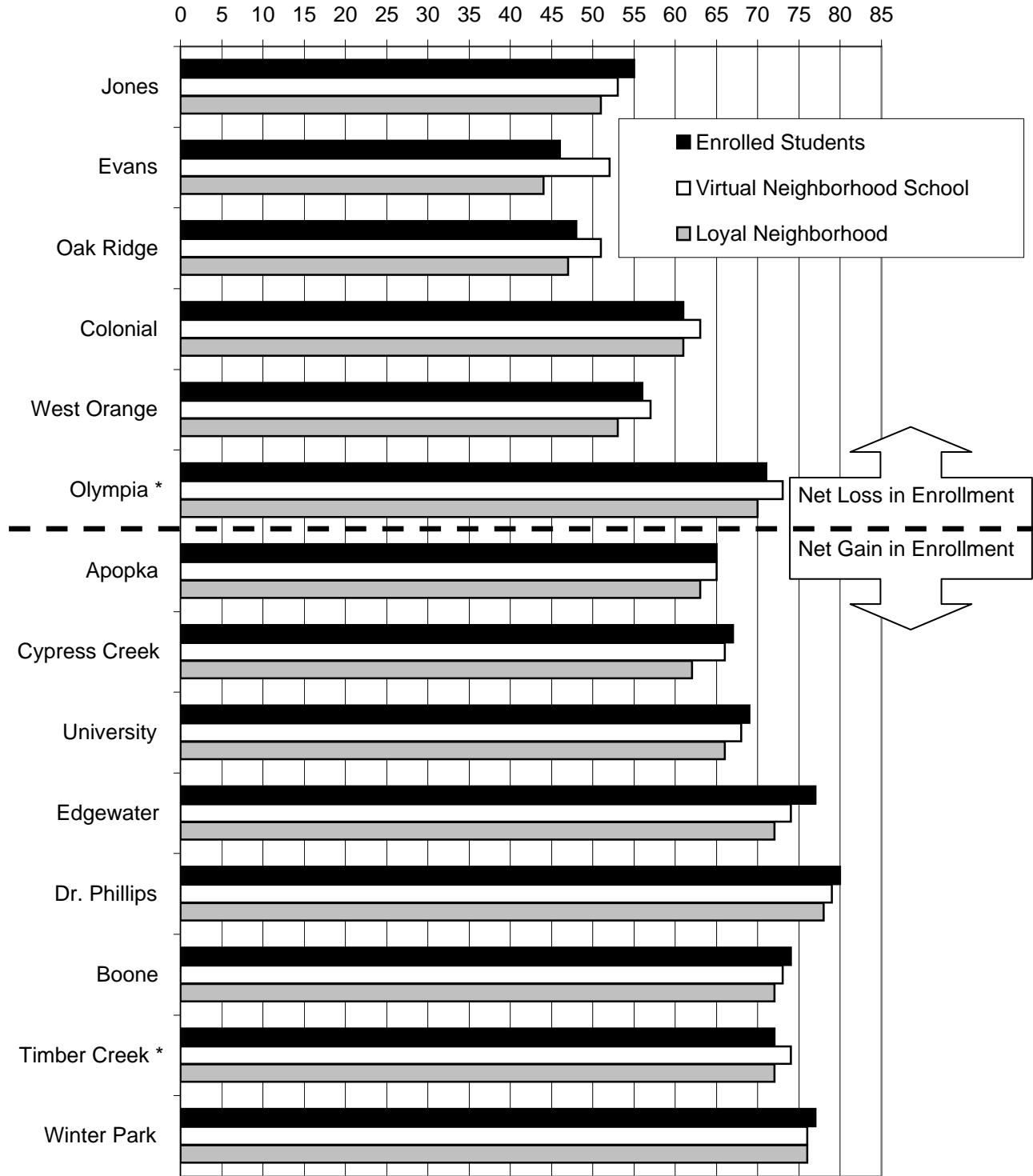
* No magnet program

**Magnet Transfer Study
FCAT Math 2002
Percent of Students 3 and Above**



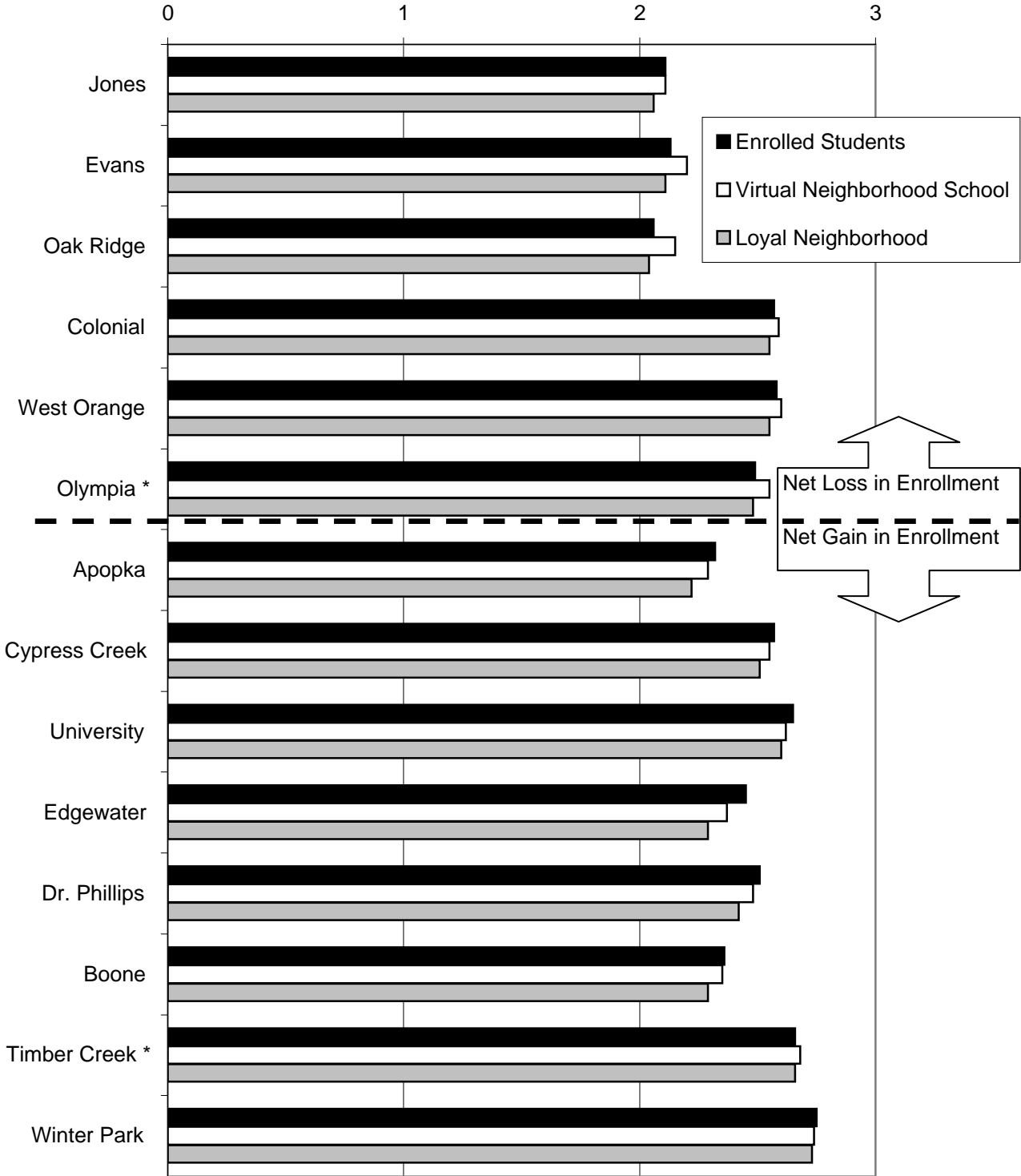
* No magnet program

**Magnet Transfer Study
FCAT Write 2002
Percent of Students 4 and Above**



* No magnet program

**Magnet Transfer Study
GPA 2002
Unweighted Mean GPA**



* No magnet program

Results and Conclusions

- For all schools, students who transfer into a school to attend a magnet program raise that school's scores when compared to the Loyal Neighborhood.
- Schools with a net gain in enrollment from Magnet Program transfers score higher when including the scores of those who transfer in and when excluding those who transfer out.
- Schools with higher FCAT Math and Reading scores have a net gain in enrollment from Magnet Program transfers (more transfer in than out).
- Schools with a net loss in enrollment score lower on Math and Reading when including those students who transfer in and when excluding those who transfer out.
- The two schools without magnets are the exceptions that prove the rule. In spite of the fact that they both have FCAT Reading scores that would predict increased enrollment, both instead have lower reading scores and a net loss in enrollment.
- FCAT Writing and unweighted mean GPA follow the same pattern as FCAT Math and Reading except Jones, which follows the pattern of schools with a positive net gain in enrollment
- The pattern of achievement in GPA follows the pattern of achievement in FCAT Reading and Math but the differences between schools are much smaller. GPA differences are similar in direction but not in magnitude.
- This study addresses *what* happened as a function of Magnet Program transfers but it cannot answer *why* it happened.

Questions to Consider When Making Decisions

- If Magnet Programs transfers were eliminated today it would have the effect of lowering the scores in the higher achieving schools and raising the scores in the lower achieving schools. Would this change the perceived quality of those schools?
- If restrictions were placed on Magnet Program transfers would the district become less attractive to students (and parents) outside the district just as the low achieving schools appear to have become less attractive within the district?
- If current practice continues, would the trends found in this study become a self-fulfilling prophecy or would schools that are already performing at a higher level attracting the most capable students away from the lower performing schools?
- Since students transferring IN to the higher achieving schools appear to raise achievement levels in the host schools, would those same students have performed as well had they attended their neighborhood schools?
- Since there appears to be much less difference between schools on GPA when compared to differences in FCAT achievement, in what ways do the grading practices at the various high schools contribute to achievement by communicating more or less rigorous standards?