

November 9, 2014

To: Parties

From: Bill Hawley

Re: Comments on CMP Version 11-7-14

Overview

Over the last several weeks, I have been in discussions with District staff about the possibilities of avoiding an R&R on the CMP. I appreciate all the effort that went into making the current revisions aimed at aligning the plan with the R&R that I drafted several weeks ago. However, while I expect that the District will be frustrated that I do not endorse every elements of the revision, I think that further changes would obviate the need for an R&R, at least from my perspective.

I think the latest plan is a significant improvement. My comments are influenced by my belief that as we move forward with the USP our goal should be to increasingly focus on outcomes while at the same time recognizing that we should be creating conditions that facilitate, or at least allow, the attainment of desired outcomes. This means that the District needs the opportunity to make decisions with the following caveats: (1) its proposals must have a reasonable chance of success and (2) proposals must not preclude the probability of achieving the goals being pursued. There are number of things about this plan about which I have concerns including themes, locations and some strategies. However, my comments are limited to the criteria and processes proposed for withdrawing magnet status in order to allow new initiatives that will improve the possibilities that the number of students who attend integrated magnet schools and programs will be noticeably increased. Hopefully, some of the reservations I have about the current plan have to do with words being used rather substance.

Concerns

I think the clearest way to go about this exercise is to simply go through the pages that address issues about which I have some concern.

Page 6

Standard 1.1 talks about “accepted” magnet applications but the goal is the number of students who were actually enrolled. In other words, the

school could accept a number of applicants who would then decide to attend another school. The standard should be reworded:

The number of students enrolled in entry grades (K ,6, 9) meets the definition of integration.

Page 7

Are the standards for Pillar 2 the same as the definitions used by the state to assign letter grades? If they are not, how will the pillar to be met? The first two standards here accept median performance as the standard of effective schools and this is not sufficiently ambitious. In most cases, the perceived quality of the school will trump the theme of the school as a reason for selecting that school for one's children.

Page 9

Section 3. Since the majority of magnet schools have a preference area, what effects will this have on the possibility that those schools can be integrated and remain integrated? Has an analysis been undertaken to determine how many out-of-preference-area students would have to be recruited from different races at the schools in order for them to achieve integration? If not, why not? If the analysis has been done, please share it.

Section B. In the first sentence the words "to the extent possible" should be deleted. It is the result of efforts not the effort itself that need to be measured. The proposed wording would allow, for example, a heavily racially concentrated school to claim that it did the best he could and that the demography was simply against it. That may be true, but it would still leave the school segregated.

Page 15

The description of pillar one should be: *All magnet schools and programs will be integrated.*

Page 16

In order to clarify the targets that schools are to achieve in order to secure stable magnet status, specific benchmarks or milestones (as implied in p.17, section 1) should be set for both of the pillars.

In section B, it becomes clear that a school could be in “strategic” status without being integrated. This means that racially concentrated schools that start as “intensive” could retain magnet status for several years without ever achieving integration. I have said from the start, that integration is the key variable with respect to magnet status. As I note below, there might be different schedules for achieving integration and academic excellence.

Page 18-19

The schedule is unacceptable to me as I’ve indicated before, it virtually ensures that magnet status cannot be withdrawn before the decision is made with respect to unitary status.

I believe that the schedule for attaining the student achievement pillar is ambiguous and needs to have specific goals for each school that involve strategic thinking. Hope is not a strategy.

But the integration pillar is much easier to define.

2013 Hundred days—baseline

2014 Hundred days—entry class made substantial progress toward achieving the integration goal

2015 Hundred days-- entry class achieved integration goal.

If a school did not meet this goal, it would lose magnet status. If the school did not achieve integration in the entry class it could appeal and demonstrate that the practices that it had put in place had promise of significant improvement in the coming year given the progress it did make.

This timeline would allow schools that were poised to be magnets several months to plan and to start up in 2016-17. This means there is a chance that new initiatives could be put in place prior to the decision on unitary status.

Page 23

In the discussion for withdrawing magnet status, one can see how unlikely it is that magnet status would be altered. Moreover schools now identified as “intensive” could, if I read this right, hold onto magnet status longer than “strategic” schools if they made modest school improvements and could remain racially concentrated for 4 to 5 years.

Let me note here that I do not understand why there needs to be different categories of schools. The criteria should apply to all schools.

Also, the plan introduced new categories for schools. But starting on page 32, it shifts back to the old categories and later changes back to the new categories. It would seem that going forward the new categories, if needed, should be used and the plan changed accordingly. Moreover, school should be re-categorized in accordance with the revised pillars.

Page 44ff

Holladay seems to have been dropped from the list of schools.

Conclusion

I believe the following changes in the November 7 version of the CMP are essential:

1. The definition of integration should be clarified as indicated.
2. Achieving integration and the achievement targets are separate and both of these pillars must be achieved.
3. The timeline for achieving integration in the entry class should be specified and moved up.
4. The District should agree to set specific milestones or benchmarks for each pillar for each school based on sensible estimates about the progress that needs to be made and the schools capacity to get there.
5. Neighborhood preference boundaries should be assigned only if this does not jeopardize the attainment of integration for each school involved.

I hope the district can agree to these suggestions and that they will meet with the approval of the plaintiffs as well.

