

May 31, 2015

To: Parties

From: Bill Hawley

Re: CMP Further Comment #1

I have had the opportunity to review the comments of the Fisher and Mendoza plaintiffs on the CMP. This has helped me clarify my thinking about the districts most recent plan. Because the district is now involved in finalizing the CMP, I will be submitting in the next day or two my suggestions about changes that need to be made. This is installment one.

Ochoa

While I support the idea of lighthouse schools-- whose purpose is to serve as hubs for professional development and school improvement-- I had raised questions about whether Ochoa was the right choice and whether the plan was sufficiently well-developed. I believe the district should withdraw its proposal to create Ochoa as lighthouse school for the following reasons:

1. The plan is not well developed and is inadequately funded.
2. Sure has a theme that is unlikely to be useful to other schools especially because that theme involves particular approach to instruction.
3. Lighthouse schools should be among the very best schools in the district. Ochoa is a B- school with its most recent grade being lower than the grade it achieved in the year before that.

Redrafting this plan for purposes of maintaining this magnet status should not be difficult because the lighthouse idea is an add-on.

Funding After Withdrawal of Magnet Status

As the Fisher plaintiffs point out, the district should clarify what it means when it says that magnet funding will be continued for a year after magnet status is discontinued. This clearly makes no sense. First, if a school's magnet status is no longer in place, those expenditures need to sustain that status should be

withdrawn. Second, it is important to recognize, as the district has in my conversations with staff and as the Fisher plaintiffs observe, withdrawal of magnet status because of poor academic performance means that students in that school deserve resources needed for school improvement. This is different from the magnet funding that the school had enjoyed but that clearly had not made much of a difference in school improvement. Third, those instances where magnet status is being withdrawn because the school is not making adequate progress with respect to integration, a different calculation is needed. For example, Davis and Roskrige are dual language schools and an analysis should be undertaken to ensure that the quality of its dual language programs can be sustained, should these schools lose magnet status. So, the district should reword this aspect of the CMP to indicate that if magnet status is withdrawn, the funding needs of the school involved would be reevaluated.

Common Support from the District for All Magnet Schools and Programs

In the planning process, magnet schools and programs were mandated to implement some general strategies such as: continuous school improvement, professional learning communities and learning centered professional development. It seems clear from reading the individual plans that the understanding of what these strategies involve, much less the capacity to implement them, varies widely. CMP needs to be clearer about the support programs and schools will receive from central administration to implement these important strategies. And, central administration must have the capacity to provide that support.

Dividing the Schools into Three Categories

The district has placed schools and programs into three categories: maintaining, intermediate and problematic. This type of categorization serves no useful purpose, an argument I have been making for a while. The criteria for determining whether a school will retain magnet status are spelled out in the plan and are clear, with one exception (that being how to measure the achievement gap). These criteria apply to all schools and programs regardless of their category.

Moreover, the categories seem to provide safe harbor when it is not clear that some of the schools can meet their integration goals even in the next year.

The Role of Paraprofessionals in Implementing Interventions for Struggling Students

There is an enormous amount of money is being proposed to finance paraprofessionals. This is particularly troublesome in those schools that are weak academically. In some cases, these folks are meant to provide direct instruction for struggling students which most are not qualified to do. In other cases, they will apparently be student sitting while teachers go off to professional learning communities. The idea that we can significantly improve student learning by using paraprofessionals extensively, especially when those people are being paid poverty wages, defies credulity. When I raised this issue with the district. I was assured that students who were underperforming would taught by certified teachers. The CMP should confirm that this will be the case. I made this point in the previous memo about the school level plans and I repeat it here because it was emphasized by the Mendoza plaintiffs and because I did not at that point insist then the district make its intent clear.

I have reviewed my previous comments on the CMP and respectfully request that the district take those comments into account in making its revisions. By bringing attention to the issues above, I do not mean to imply that my earlier suggestions are no longer important. And as indicated above, I will comment further on some of the other issues raised by the plaintiffs in the next day or two.