



Tucson Unified School District
Student Assignment Committee Report
November 2015



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GRADE CONFIGURATION PROPOSAL INTRODUCTION

The District submits this proposal as the last step of a months-long engagement with the Special Master and Plaintiffs, prior to the filing of formal DIAs or requests for approval.

The District first submitted draft DIAs (and other information) to the Student Assignment Committee (SAC) in July and made this information available to the Special Master and Plaintiffs on July 20, 2015. Pursuant to the initial timeline, the District planned to file a draft DIA/NARA on September 18, 2015, including updated draft DIAs incorporating the feedback, comments, and concerns provided by the Special Master and Plaintiffs over the preceding two month period. Pursuant to the parties' discussion on August 26, 2015, the Special Master and Plaintiffs would respond to the September 18, 2015 draft DIA/NARA within ten days, by September 28, 2015.

On September 18, 2015, the District notified the Plaintiffs and Special Master that in lieu of submitting a draft DIA/NARA on that date, it intended to submit a proposal by September 25, 2015 (including draft DIAs) – with a request for a response within ten days, no later than October 5th. The District submitted a written proposal on September 25, 2015, and received written responses from some of the parties as they reviewed the proposal ahead of the in-person conference scheduled for October 5th and 6th, and used the conference as an opportunity for further engagement and collaboration. Based on the outcome of the conference discussions, the District revised the proposals and presented them (including Special Master and Plaintiff feedback) to its Governing Board for information only on October 20, 2015. Next, District staff presented the Governing Board, Special Master, and Plaintiff feedback to the SAC on October 28, 2015 for further analysis and review. Based on these discussions, committee members reviewed, evaluated, and modified the proposals. Finally, District staff presented all of the information to the Superintendent's Leadership Team (SLT) for further analysis and review ahead of the Governing Board vote in November. If approved, the District would then take the steps necessary to file the formal request with the Court, and to follow the agreed-on briefing schedule once it filed the formal request

STUDENT ASSIGNMENT COMMITTEE PROCESS TIMELINE SUMMARY:

- June 11 TUSD Planning Department met with DLR Group to plan the SAC process
- June 26 Conference Call with the Special Master to discuss and approve the SAC process
- July 6 DLR Group toured the five TUSD schools under consideration
- July 14 Conference call with five TUSD principals to review their school's current grade configuration and programmatic function
- July 20 Draft DIAs and other information available to Special Master and Plaintiffs
- July 22 Student Assignment Committee Meeting
- Presentation of case studies in similar grade configurations as those proposed
 - Presentation from the Principals of Morgan Maxwell K-8 and Robins K-8 about the challenges and rewards of a K-8 school
 - Presentation of preliminary demographic and facility data
 - Goals and objectives
 - Evaluation criteria
- August 10 Student Assignment Committee Meeting
- Develop Options
 - In three small groups, lay out how a grade configuration change might work in each case
 - Sam Brown presented past concerns from the Special Master and Plaintiffs
 - Evaluate the options based on the agreed goals and objectives
 - Discuss the Pros and Cons of each option
- August 19 Student Assignment Committee Meeting
- Presentation by the Plaintiffs to the SAC Committee
 - Revisit options with a focus on desegregation goals
 - Evaluate the pros and cons and revise the options based on Plaintiff Feedback
- August 26 Special Master and Plaintiffs Conference Call
- Review SAC draft recommendations with the Special Master and Plaintiffs
- September 25 Draft DIA and NARA available to the Special Master and Plaintiffs
- October 5/6 Comments received from the Special Master and Plaintiffs
- October 20 Presentation to the Governing Board for information only
- October 28 Student Assignment Committee Meeting
- Presentation by Magee Principal on effects of the proposed grade reconfigurations
 - Presentation of Special Master and Plaintiffs' concerns about the proposed grade reconfigurations
 - Revise options to better address on feedback
- November 10 Presentation to the Governing Board

I. REVISED SAC GOALS

Based on feedback and input from the Special Master and Plaintiffs, and internal review and analysis, the District revised the goals of the Student Assignment Committee multiple times between August 5, 2015, and September 10, 2015. Below are the final, revised goals:

The goals are not designed to function as minimum standards. Thus, a proposed change should not be rejected for failure to meet one or more goals. Proposed changes should be evaluated by weighing the costs and benefits, in light of the District's obligations under the USP.

- a. that increase integration of District schools, considering the four integration strategies (through the proposed change itself, or through strategies related to the proposed change);
 - b. that enhance education (e.g. reducing the number of student transitions, providing for supplemental programs or curricular continuity between grades);
 - c. that improve student retention; and
 - d. that will be supported by the communities of the affected schools (those impacted directly and indirectly through the potential loss of more than ten students).
1. To attract a broader applicant student pool as that will enhance the impact of marketing, outreach, and recruitment efforts and further integrate District schools.
 2. To ensure that the additional students can be added without detracting from existing programs or diverting resources from other schools.
 3. To ensure that the receiving facilities can support the additional grades with minimal facility investments.
 4. To address both immediate and future needs due to the reconfiguration; consider short-term and long-term impacts.

II. GRADE RECONFIGURATION PROCESS

In its May 12, 2105 Order denying the request for grade reconfigurations at Sabino and Fruchthendler (Order 1799, request denied without prejudice to it being reurged), the Court outlined four specific, process-related expectations for similar requests in the future – in summary:

1. the District shall solicit the input of the Special Master and Plaintiffs;
2. the District must use four strategies for assigning students to schools, to be developed in consultation with the Plaintiffs and the Special Master;
3. when it undertakes certain enumerated student assignment actions, the District must review to determine whether to redraw its attendance boundaries; and
4. the District should explain how a student assignment change fits into other USP plans and strategies and if not, why not.

As described below, the District has worked diligently over the past few months to fulfill all four process-related expectations outlined by the Court in May of 2015 to prepare to “reurge” the previous requests and three additional requests. This work has been informed by the input, analysis, thoughtfulness, time, and energy of the Student Assignment Committee (SAC) volunteers, the Special Master, the Plaintiffs, and the District’s outside consultant (DLR Group)

1. The District Shall Solicit the Input of the Special Master and Plaintiffs

The Court found that USP section I.D.1 requires: “the District ‘shall’ solicit the input of the Special Master and the Plaintiffs and submit items for review before they are put into practice or use for ‘all new or amended plans, policies, procedures, or other significant changes’ contemplated pursuant to the USP.” ECF 1799 at 3-4. The Court found further that “[t]here is nothing about a NARA proposal to change student assignments to exempt it from the USP requirement that the District, the parties, and the Special Master comprehensively consider the proposal, pursuant to applicable USP criteria, in an effort to increase the integration of TUSD schools.” *Id.* at 5.

Within a month of the Court’s Order, the District had developed a draft timeline and proposal to engage the Special Master and Plaintiffs in the process of reviewing grade reconfigurations comprehensively, pursuant to applicable USP criteria, in an effort to increase the integration of its schools. In June 2015, the District reached out to the Special Master to discuss the timeline and proposed approach. After discussing the timeline and approach with the Special Master, the District shared the timeline and approach with the Plaintiffs in July 2015 to solicit their feedback.

Throughout July, August, and into September, the District engaged the Special Master and Plaintiffs in an effort to consider the proposals comprehensively pursuant to applicable USP criteria in an effort to increase the integration of TUSD schools. These efforts included multiple phone and email exchanges, the solicitation of comment and feedback, the sharing of SAC committee meeting agendas and materials, an invitation to Plaintiff representatives to present their concerns to the SAC, and the facilitation of a teleconference in August.

During this time, the Special Master and Plaintiffs reviewed relevant material and requested supplemental information. They also shared concerns including, but not limited to: process, goals, timelines, approach, committee make-up, enrollment data (and projected enrollment data), equal access, student retention, school attractiveness, geography, demographics, marketing and outreach, transportation, K8 school distribution, implementation, boundaries, magnets, pairing and clustering, open enrollment, analyses of additional sites for grade expansion, impacts to surrounding schools and communities, access to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, scope of the Desegregation Impact Analyses (DIAs), educational benefits of reducing student transitions between schools/grades, strategies for mitigating integrative and/or educational impacts to the schools directly (and indirectly) impacted, feeder patterns, Advance Learning Experiences (ALEs), costs, school capacity, short- and long-term impacts, and potential impacts for promoting desegregation through the proposals themselves, or through mitigating strategies involving one or more proposals.

Following the engagement with the Special Master and Plaintiffs in August and September 2015, the District submitted its proposals for grade reconfigurations, including draft DIAs, and solicited additional feedback from the Special Master and Plaintiffs. The Special Master and Plaintiffs provided verbal feedback during a discussion at the USP Conference held on October 6, 2015, and provided written feedback through October 19, 2015. The District presented their feedback and input consideration to the Governing Board on October 20, 2015, and presented it again (along with Governing Board feedback) to the SAC on October 25, 2015 for further review and analysis. District staff then presented all of the information (including Special Master, Plaintiff, Governing Board, and SAC member feedback) to the Superintendent's Leadership Team (SLT) for further analysis and review ahead of the Governing Board vote in November.

District staff and leadership carefully considered the additional feedback, analyzed internal and external stakeholder concerns, revised goals, provided supplemental information, revised the scope and information contained in its draft DIAs, proposed strategies to improve integration and mitigate impact to surrounding schools, conducted further equal access analyses, considered additional sites for grade expansion to improve the integration of District schools, engaged in comprehensive and creative review and analysis on ways to improve integration through the proposals (and within each proposal) using transportation, marketing and outreach, and by strengthening ALE programs, considered the proposals comprehensively in the context of the four primary integration strategies, analyzed feeder patterns and boundaries, and considered impacts to surrounding communities and those directly impacted by the proposals (including inviting and hosting principals of affected schools to SAC meetings), rescheduled the timelines to allow more time for feedback, reviewed the proposals to assess the need for boundary changes per the USP, proposed and evaluated scenarios to increase integration, assessed the distribution of K8 schools, expanded the size and makeup of the committee to include principals from potentially-impacted schools, invited Plaintiffs' reps to engage with the SAC members on issues important to each class, conducted surveys of parents in the immediately impacted areas to determine interest levels, conducted surveys of non-Anglo parents in racially concentrated boundaries to determine interest levels in participating in incentive transportation with express busing, considered the positive integrative impacts of express busing (increasing integration at the receiving school and decreasing racial concentration at the sending schools), developed cost and revenue estimates, and examined potential sixth grade additions at west and south side K-5 schools.¹

The Special Master and Plaintiff comments are available in Appendix B.

2. The District Must Use Four Strategies for Assigning Students to Schools, to be Developed in Consultation with the Plaintiffs and the Special Master

The Court found “the student assignments proposed by TUSD [at Fruchthendler and Sabino] were not considered in the context of the four integration strategies required by the USP: attendance boundaries, pairing and clustering of schools; magnet schools and programs; and open enrollment.” *Id.* at 5. Between July and November, the District considered the proposals comprehensively in the context of the four integration strategies, as described above. The executive summaries for each proposal include a summary of the District’s analysis of each proposal in the context of the four integration strategies proposed by the USP.

In addition, the District has committed to developing and proposing initiatives on a much broader scale to increase the number of students attending integrated schools within the District by March 1, 2016 (see ECF 1858-1 at 3:1-3). In developing these initiatives, the District will consider the four integration strategies, and others, for improving integration beyond the current proposals.

3. When it Undertakes Certain Enumerated Student Assignment Actions, the District Must Review to Determine Whether to Redraw Its Attendance Boundaries.

The Court found that USP section II.D.2 requires “TUSD to review to determine whether to redraw its attendance boundaries, if it makes student assignment changes.” ECF 1799 at 5. The District reviewed each proposal to determine whether boundary changes were necessary, or whether boundary changes would improve integration. None of the proposals required a boundary change, nor would a boundary change have significantly improved integration in any of the proposals. The results of these analyses are outlined in the executive summaries for each proposal.

¹The District’s engagement over a period of 5-6 months in 2014 (during the boundary review process) informed many aspects of the integration analysis conducted in 2015. The 2014 Boundary Committee, after meeting for almost half a year, reviewing hundreds of pages of data, pouring over maps, and analyzing over 50 creative proposals to increase integration, proposed very few options for improving integration (and even fewer that promised significant impacts to improve integration). In that context, the District never intended to engage in another 5-6 month process to consider each and every possible scenario to improve integration districtwide (as it had just completed less than one year prior). Neither the USP nor relevant Court orders require such an effort every time the District proposes a student assignment change. Instead, the District considered a small number of potential grade reconfiguration proposals with the Special Master and Plaintiffs that might improve integration, retain students, and/or improve educational quality. The District has further analyzed these proposals (and the potential for additional proposals) within the context of applicable USP criteria, through the lens of the USP’s four integration strategies, and through communications and engagement with the Special Master, the Plaintiffs, external consultants, and the SAC.

4. The District Should Explain How a Student Assignment Change Fits Into Other USP Plans and Strategies and If Not, Why Not.

The Court found that “[p]lans and strategies are now in place, pursuant to the USP, for addressing student assignments but this NARA fails to reflect how the Fruchthendler-Sabino Honors Pipeline plan fits into these plans and strategies, and if not, why.” ECF 1799 at 5. The current proposal reflects how each proposed grade reconfiguration might potentially impact student assignment, transportation, educational programming, family engagement, and the District’s ALE efforts. In addition, the revised scope of each DIA considers impacts of each proposal on the District’s efforts to implement the USP.