

## **ADDENDUM A**

### **Student Success Specialists**

The Special Master supports the District's effort to rethink how best to address the obligations outlined in Section V.E.4 of the USP, many of which are now assigned to Student Success Specialists (SSS). The comments here are meant to contribute to that effort. The comments focus on the challenges the District must meet if it is to significantly address the learning and social-emotional development needs of African American students but these ideas apply to Latino students as well.

The Special Master believes strongly that the District needs to devote more attention and resources to improving outcomes for struggling students, especially African American students. However, it is not reasonable to expect a small team of under-funded, under-armed, under-paid and under-trained individuals to have a significant impact on the learning needs of over 3000 students.

In the recent discussion between the Special Master and the District, three roles were identified as summarizing much of the work of SSS: (1) organize events, (2) deliver interventions, and (3) advocate on behalf of students. One or two people can organize events. SSS, however committed they are, do not have the training or experience to deliver interventions that substantially improve academic and behavioral outcomes. When SSS serve as advocates, they take on a responsibility that should be, and the Special Master believes for the most part is, the responsibility of all teachers, administrators, counselors, and other staff. Moreover, as the experience of the District shows, advocacy—while needed sometimes--can undermine collaboration and does not, in itself, bring about change.

The Special Master does not mean to diminish the commitments or energy that is manifested the work of SSS, but there is little evidence that they have made a big difference for those students they serve. If they didn't exist now, we would not invent them. Indeed, we have even worked to ensure that tutoring was done by certified teachers. Why would we argue that SSS be responsible for tier two interventions?

Presently, TUSD is implementing equity-focused practices that most districts lack both the commitment and the courage to pursue. To be sure, the District is not doing all of the things the USP requires at the highest possible level of performance. That is not surprising given the difficulty of implementing dozens of initiatives simultaneously. But, it is making progress across a broad range of interrelated actions.

To enhance and build upon the current efforts as well as to ensure that those efforts are not undermined by the sheer weight of the challenges involved while insisting that priority be given to actions that promote the success of African American and Latino students, the District might be well served by creating an office staffed by a small cadre of African American and Latino expert educators who can serve as consultants and provide oversight with respect to culturally responsive practices whether it be manifest in teaching, curriculum, coaching, administering discipline, working with families, or developing future district policies and procedures. The Special Master would have this office report directly to the Superintendent for both practical and symbolic reasons.

It seems to the Special Master that the work TUSD is doing gives legitimacy to asserting TUSD's national leadership in the pursuit of equity. It is time to replace the sense that the District is in a state of siege with pride in being where other districts need to go.