

## Responses to Mendoza RFIs re Wakefield

November 21, 2019

1. **RFI #2605** - [Why is the District] proposing to open a new middle school even as it has suggested elsewhere that it is seriously questioning the wisdom of the traditional (grades 6-8) model?

**Response:** middle school revitalization includes many choices: K-5, K-6, and K-8. Initially, the District proposed a change to K-6 at most elementary schools *except* for the magnet middle schools, including Dodge. As the Wakefield proposal was based on replicating some of the academic and integration success of the no-boundary middle school at Dodge, it also replicated the grade band of that model, 6-8. At this time, the District is not proposing any grade changes to the traditional 6-8 middle school model, but is evaluating which options may be the most successful in terms of student achievement and attraction.

2. **RFI #2606** - Is the structured mentoring and job-embedded learning referenced in the DIA the same mentoring and job-embedded learning that beginning teachers receive at all other TUSD schools?

**Response:** No.

3. **RFI #2607** - If not, how is it different? Who would provide it and how would it differ from the current mentoring being provided to beginning teachers?

**Response:** This program would involve master teachers rather than teacher mentors, would be provided to student teachers not beginning teachers, and would be provided by an embedded “mentor” that models instruction and observes instruction – rather than one who visits periodically who is not always on site. The initial model is for master teachers to teach and student-teachers to observe during the first semester, then switch for the second semester. This program will be implemented in conjunction with the University of Arizona as part of a “lab school.” So, the District is still developing other details with the U of A and will likely develop and adjust the program on an ongoing basis over the first few years.

4. **RFI #2608** - Would teachers in the “lab school” receive the referenced mentoring in addition to that which is now provided to beginning teachers?

**Response:** No, teachers at the lab school will not be beginning teachers.

5. **RFI #2609** - What exactly is meant by “TUSD’s core teaching values” beyond what is set out in footnote 2 of the DIA (all of which should be values that all student teachers should be supported in adopting and implementing regardless of where they are assigned)?

**Response:** it means that the priorities and values that a TUSD teacher is expected to exemplify. Chief among these are those values listed in footnote 2, but including other core

values set by the Governing Board, Superintendents, and academic leadership as expressed through strategic goals, Board policies, etc.

6. **RFI #2610** - How is the referenced support to teachers to adopt and implement TUSD's core teaching values different from what is already done at other TUSD schools?

**Response: support will be provided to cohorts of student teachers who are intentionally placed together along with master teachers who are also placed together intentionally. Support will involve more frequent and regular contact between student teacher and master teacher than normally occurs between beginning teacher and teacher mentor.**

7. **RFI #2611** - If professional development or support is being contemplated beyond what already is being provided to beginning or student teachers, please describe that professional development or support.

**Response: the District is still developing other details of what this support will look like along with the U of A and will likely develop and adjust the program on an ongoing basis over the first few years.**

8. **RFI #2612** - Is the partnership the District describes in the DIA the Arizona Teaching Fellows program? If so, how would the partnership as it relates to Wakefield differ from the Arizona Teaching Fellows program TUSD already participates in?

**Response: No, it is not.**

9. **RFI #2613** - Does the District envision a school to which it will assign beginning teachers (and "struggling teachers") in order to train them so that they may later fill "vacancies at other TUSD schools"?

**Response: No.**

10. **RFI #2614** - If not, what role does the District see Wakefield playing in addressing vacancies at other schools?

**Response: Developing student teachers to will fill vacancies once they receive their teaching certificate.**

11. **RFI #2615** - And if the model is to train teachers to move on to different schools in the District, how will the District build a community of teachers at Wakefield?

**Response: Through the embedded master teachers who remain at the site.**

12. **RFI #2616** - To what extent is the District proposing that Wakefield play a role in supporting TUSD's existing struggling teachers, if at all?

**Response: As a lab school, the District and the University will study different approaches to coaching, observation, mentoring, support, etc. and replicate effective practices through the TUSD New Teacher Induction Program, Teacher Support Plans, or similar programs in the future.**

*NOTE: The District understands the Mendoza Plaintiffs to be asking for greater understanding related to the lab school component of the Wakefield proposal. Unfortunately, some of those details are yet to be determined. The District is well aware of the plaintiffs desire to know more details about the proposal, but the existing process does not lend itself to detailed planning and collaboration with potential partners prior to obtaining a Court order. In the past, Plaintiffs have accused the District of going too far down the road in planning a proposal as to appear to the public to be a “fait accompli” before obtaining Court approval. Thus, the District has been extremely careful to work with its partners to develop concepts and general approaches, without getting too far into the details before obtaining Court approval.*

13. **RFI #2617** - Why is the proposal to implement a new grow your own program not being made at a school like Utterback that could benefit from such a teacher program particularly in light of its dropping student enrollment?

**Response: the District examined the possibility of incorporating this program at Utterback, but this is the type of program that is built best from the ground-up – in this case, one grade at a time. Such development is simply not possible at an existing school that already enrolls students and already employs teachers. Implementing such a program at Utterback would mean displacing many existing teachers to make room for the new master teachers and student teachers.**

**Furthermore, Utterback is already working towards becoming the District’s first full AVID middle school and it is making gains in academic achievement over the past year with new leadership. While the District will continue to support the momentum and vision at Utterback, it is not, at this time, planning on disrupting that momentum by introducing an entirely new program and model to the school.**

14. **RFI #2618** - Particularly in light of the fact that Utterback students scored ELA and Math AzMERIT proficiency scores (in spring 2019) at or below 19% and as low as 7% across each of the 6th through 8th grades, has the District further analyzed what the impact of the Wakefield proposal would be on academic achievement at Utterback (and other schools, for example, Safford) which has experienced dropping enrollment particularly if strong students who might otherwise attend Utterback (or Safford) elect to attend the new Wakefield instead? What has it found?

**Response: see response to 13, above. Re “strong students” – the DIA clearly indicates a minimal projected impact to other schools (including Safford and Utterback). The question presupposes that “strong” students will apply to Wakefield. They might, or they might apply to Mansfield Magnet or any other middle school that the District is marketing and recruiting based on the USP and related Court Orders. And, even if they do apply,**

seats at Wakefield are limited and enrollment will be done by lottery so not all students who apply will be accepted.

**The foundation of this question suggests that the District should not open new programs, should not market and recruit for magnet schools (or non-magnet schools) based on the possibility that new programs or new magnets might attract “strong” students. This is an untenable and confusing position given Mendoza Plaintiffs’ previous criticisms of the District for alleged failures to open new programs and alleged failures to market and recruit sufficiently for magnet and non-magnet schools.**

15. **RFI #2619** - Does the District have any plan or strategy to address what is likely to be a perception that the District may be “giving up” on these schools and redirecting its attention and resources elsewhere?

**Response: Yes. The Wakefield proposal is but one component of an overall middle school revitalization strategy that seeks to improve instruction, outcomes, and attractiveness of all of TUSD’s grade 6-8 options.**

16. **RFI #2620** - Does the District have any plan or strategy to address what Mendoza Plaintiffs believe may be an exacerbation of dropping enrollment at Utterback, Safford, and other schools as a result of the proposal?

**Response: No, the DIA does not project an exacerbation of dropping enrollment at other schools as a result of this proposal. The proposal, however, is one component in a larger District plan and strategy to revitalize middle schools, including ongoing efforts to address enrollment loss at Utterback and Safford.**

17. **RFI #2621** - How does the District square the proposal’s anticipated costs and TUSD’s existing overcapacity at TUSD with the closure of Wakefield given the reasons for its closure?

**Response: Circumstances in 2020 are different than ten years ago when the District began looking at closing schools.**

18. **RFI #2622** - Please confirm that with respect to the revised DIA, if the proposal moves forward, TUSD intends to pay the referenced \$2-2.5 million in needed repairs with M&O funds.

**Response: The District intends to use primarily Plant Funds.**

19. **RFI #2623** - Of the needed repairs at Wakefield (the cost of which would be in excess of \$1.3 million) as described in the recently filed annual report (Doc. 2308-1), which repairs would need to occur before the reopening of Wakefield?

**Response: The first phase will require cosmetic and technology upgrades to the first phase rooms, including the cafeteria and library; furnishings for those same rooms; security upgrades; and roof repairs.**

20. **RFI #2624** - How does the District square what it describes in the annual report as seemingly significant repair needs with its DIA statement that needed upgrades are “mostly cosmetic”? If the District made roof repairs as asserted in the DIA (at 2), why does the annual report reference \$400,000 in needed renovation to roofing at Wakefield as of June 30, 2019?

**Response: The annual report figures are estimates based on square footage and the Facility Condition Index of the roof. The latest bids for the roofing at Wakefield indicate the repairs will cost \$106,000.**

21. **RFI #2625** - Please provide an explanation of the District’s proposed “modified lottery” referenced in the DIA, including whether it would apply to both TUSD and non-TUSD students applying to Wakefield.

**Response: Dodge MS currently produces a disproportionately high number of UHS-qualified students. In 2018-19, more than half of the Native American and African American students who applied to Dodge MS were not offered placement because the lottery seeks to match the District enrollment averages based on race and ethnicity. In 2018-19, the District averages at the middle school level were 10% and 3% for African American and Native American students, respectively. So, by way of example, if Dodge (or a new Wakefield) offered 100 6th grade seats, only 13 African American and Native American students would be placed, while 22 Anglo and 60 Latino students would be placed.**

**In a modified lottery, based on the example of 100 seats, the District would increase the number of placements for Native American and African American students due to their small numbers generally and, specifically, their low numerical representation at UHS and other high school ALE programs (maybe to 10 and 20 respectively, rather than 3 and 10). This may reduce a small number of seats for other student groups like Anglo and Latino students (maybe to 15 and 50 respectively, rather than 22 and 60). This will both maximize the integration potential of the enrollment pool, and serve to prepare larger cohorts for high school ALE options like UHS.**

**A class of 100 students with 15 Anglo students, 20 African American students, 50 Latino students, 10 Native American students, and 5 Asian/Pacific Islander students is much more diverse than if the school had 10 black students and 3 Native American students.**

**Further, if the modified lottery works to improve diversity and grow larger numerical cohorts of traditionally underserved students, it can be replicated at other sites.**

22. **RFI #2626** - While the DIA states TUSD’s intent that Wakefield serve as an ALE pipeline to UHS, Cholla, and Pueblo, the DIA fails to address that District effort would

be needed to interest white students attending Wakefield to subsequently attend Cholla and Pueblo (as it attempts to also interest more Latinos and African American students to UHS) to move those schools toward integration.

**Response: the District would promote all high school ALE programs to all Wakefield students, but will include targeted recruitment of the like described by the Mendoza Plaintiffs.**

23. **RFI #2627** - Please provide any analysis the District has conducted on the issue above, and any effort or strategy the District will employ to encourage and ensure the above described movement of students to move UHS, Cholla, and Pueblo toward integration.

**Response: the District has not conducted such analysis with respect to Wakefield. It will be four years from now before a Wakefield student enters high school and the District intends to work over the next 1-2 years to develop such efforts or strategies in conjunction with the U of A, Higher Ground, the ALE department, the named high schools, and central leadership. This request arises a very good point – but it is not one that is presently a priority considering the other factors that need to be in place in order to open the school if approved.**

24. **RFI #2628** - On what basis does the District assert that the new Wakefield would provide a high-performing ALE (or ALE-like) experience for students at the school?

**Response: based on its intent to offer accelerated courses, taught by master teachers who are supported by student teachers in a small-school environment (similar to Dodge MS).**

25. **RFI #2629** - Why is it not the District's goal to provide all students in all middle schools in the District an ALE-like experience?

**Response: that is the ultimate goal of TUSD and every school district.**

26. **RFI #2630** - Please provide further explanation of how this incentive transportation system is intended to work.

**Response: As part of its 2018 comprehensive study, the District identified census tracts with 30 or more “white” or “white and Hispanic” 5th through 8th grade students who live within TUSD but do not attend TUSD schools. There are more than a dozen of these areas within five miles of Wakefield. The District will develop at least one express bus route that utilizes an existing bus route that picks up from a “hub” (transfer point) within, or near, an incentive zone. The District outlined this strategy in its transportation plan. An express bus is an important transportation incentive for interested parents and students living some distance from Wakefield. Thus, an incentive transportation express bus to Wakefield MS will work the same way magnet transportation works for Dodge MS to remove distance as a barrier to interest and enrollment.**

27. **RFI #2631** - If the goal, for example, was to incentivize more white students to attend the school and a Latino child who lived in the designated specific area was enrolled in the school would that student be denied free transportation?

**Response: No, because transportation would be limited to students who were accepted through the lottery and enrolled.**

28. **RFI #2632** - Has the District already identified specific areas whose resident students would be targeted to receive free transportation to the school? If so, what are those areas and how were they chosen?

**Response: yes, generally – see response to 26 above. No, specifically – though the District has seriously considered Booth-Fickett or Palo Verde as a hub because of its east-central location, and proximity to census tracts with “recruitable students” who would improve integration.**

29. **RFI #2633** - Has the District made any estimates of what the costs of the contemplated new form of incentive transportation would be?

**Response: yes, little to nothing as it intends to utilize existing routes.**

30. **RFI #2634** - Are Mendoza Plaintiffs correct in understanding that, under the revised DIA, TUSD would relocate the Family Engagement Center currently at the site? If so, where does the District anticipate it would relocate the center to? What would the related costs be and with what funds would they be paid?

**Response: yes, correct. The center would not have to be moved the first year. If approved, the District would develop options and then select the best option**