



Tucson Unified School District

**Revised Dropout Prevention and Graduation Plan  
(Dropout and Retention Plan)  
May 22, 2014**

**USP LANGUAGE**

***V. QUALITY OF EDUCATION***

***E. Student Engagement and Support***

***2. Academic and Behavioral Supports Assessment and Plan***

*b. By ~~July 1, 2013~~ September 1, 2013<sup>1</sup>, the ABSC shall develop: (i) an assessment of existing programs, resources, and practices disaggregated by school site(s), grades served, number of students served, ELL status, and resources (e.g., part-time or full-time personnel assigned, annual budget); (ii) an analysis, based on the data identified in this Section, of any additional resources or programs that may be needed, by grade and school site; (iii) an analysis of the school sites with the highest concentration of students in need of such programs and resources; (iv) annual goals, in collaboration with relevant staff, for increasing graduation rates for African American and Latino students, which shall be shared with the Parties and the Special Master and used by the District to evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts; and (v) procedures to ensure follow up when Mojave automatically flags a student for attention. By ~~October 1, 2013~~ November 1, 2013<sup>2</sup>, the ABSC shall develop a plan, in collaboration with the personnel identified below in this Section, incorporating research-based strategies to focus and increase resources for academic and behavioral support programs and dropout prevention services to ensure equitable access to such programs, concentrate resources on school site(s) and in areas where student and school data indicate there is the greatest need, and reduce the dropout rate and increase the graduation rate in each high school.*

*i. Dropout Prevention and Retention Plan. The District's dropout prevention and retention plan shall include, but not be limited to:*

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<sup>1</sup> This date was changed by agreement among the Special Master, counsel for plaintiffs and the District. The assessment and the flag procedures were completed by September 1, 2013; the analyses was completed by October 1, 2013; and the annual goals were completed in conjunction with the development of the plan (dropout data vital to developing goals was not released from the Arizona Department of Education until the Fall).

<sup>2</sup> This date was changed by agreement among the Special Master, counsel for plaintiffs and the District.

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- I. *Developing yearly goals for lowering dropout rates, increasing graduation rates, and reducing retentions in grade for African American and Latino students, including ELLs, in each high school, taking into account the recent dropout, graduation and retention rates for each group. Graduation rates, disaggregated by a number of factors including race, ethnicity and ELL status, for the 2008 -2011 school years are set forth in Appendix H;*
- II. *Hiring or designating a dropout coordinator to work with the ABSC to implement the strategies identified herein to reduce dropout, increase graduation, and focus school and District resources on working with students whose patterns of attendance, classroom performance, or other individual challenges indicate a serious risk of dropping out;*
- III. *Developing and implementing strategies to identify African American and Latino students, including ELL students, most at risk of being retained in grade and providing identified students with extra time and resources to accelerate their learning (e.g., additional time for instruction in and after school, summer programs and individualized support, including participation and literacy programs). Particular attention shall be given to reducing the retention rate of students in grades 3 and 8;*
- IV. *The engagement, as appropriate, of language accessible social workers, health clinics, and school staff, or volunteers to assist in providing supports to these students;*
- V. *Summer credit recovery programs rather than grade retention whenever possible;*
- VI. *Ninth grade academies to ease the transition to high school;*
- VII. *Special efforts to involve at-risk students and their families in school programs and to improve academic skills;*
- VIII. *Positive alternatives to suspension; and*
- IX. *Consultation with national experts on dropout prevention.*

## **OVERVIEW**

### **USP**

The Unitary Status Plan (USP) requires that the Academic and Behavioral Coordinator (ABSC):

- 1) complete an assessment of existing programs, resources, and practices disaggregated by school site(s), grades served, number of students served, ELL status, and resources (e.g., part-time or full-time personnel assigned, annual budget);
- 2) complete an analysis, based on the data identified in this Section, of any additional resources or programs that may be needed, by grade and school site;
- 3) complete an analysis of the school sites with the highest concentration of

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students in need of such programs and resources; and 4) set annual goals, in collaboration with relevant staff, for increasing graduation rates for African American and Latino students.

#### Student Support Review and Assessment (SSRA)

The SSRA was conducted from July through September of 2013 and completed on October 1, 2013. The ABSC assembled a team made up of various staff from a variety of district departments. The team created a 170-question survey for schools to elicit responses about site-based resources, programs, and supports. Most of the survey questions were simple yes or no answers as the team sought to gather data from multiple sites in a meaningful format. The survey categorized the supports as follows:

- Tutoring
- Fine Arts
- Student Support Services
- Exceptional Education
- Academic Intervention
- Behavioral Intervention
- Summer Program / Transition
- Before / Afterschool Programs
- Instruction and Instructional Support
- Interscholastics
- Family Engagement

The team also obtained information from central departments about the resources and support systems they provide to schools and students.

#### Graduation and Dropout Prevention Plan

Through December of 2013, the Graduation and Dropout Prevention committee and subcommittees continued to meet frequently to review data, analyze current district practices, and plan for more effective District practices in order to best provide access to and support for “At Risk” African American and Latino students, including ELL students. The subcommittees included Family Engagement, Positive Alternatives to Suspension, and Supports for “At Risk” Students, Strategies to Reduce Retention and increase Graduation, and Recommendation for Review and Assessment.

#### Implementation

Some recommendations resulting from the Student Support Review and Assessment (SSRA) were implemented during SY 2013-14; others will be implemented in SY 2014-15 with monitoring, evaluation, and adjustment as needed. In addition, in an annual review, the designated committee will continue to research best practices, seek resources, provide training, and recommend remedies to any supports for Graduation and Dropout Prevention for African American and Latino students, including ELL students.

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**DEFINITIONS**

AASSD	African American Student Services Department provides support services for African American Students.
MASSD	Mexican-American Student Services Department, a District department that offers mentoring and tutoring services to primarily Latino students.
Unitary Status Plan (USP)	A court-mandated plan to guide the District in its efforts to achieve “unitary status” by eliminating the vestiges of a “dual” or segregated system.
AVID	Advancement Through Individual Determination (AVID) is an international program that is highly effective in providing academic support for underrepresented students with a college-preparatory focus.
AZELLA	Arizona English Language Learner Assessment. An assessment proficiency of the English language learners for appropriate instruction.
AIMS	Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards. A standard based assessment that measures a student’s proficiency of the Arizona Academic Content Standards in writing, reading and mathematics.
PARCC	Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, a 19-state partnership that is developing K-12 assessments in English and Math.
True North Logic	An on-line training website that allows employees to take web-based courses or take other training courses offered by the employer.
Stanford 10	A national assessment in multiple choice formats used by elementary to secondary schools in the United States. Stanford 10 measures student progress in content standards for reading and math.
MTSS	Multi-Tier System of Support, aka Response to Intervention (RtI), is a multi-tiered framework designed to maximize achievement for all students. It focuses on outcomes through the systematic gathering of data to guide educational decisions. As such, MTSS is not a system to categorize and refer students for Exceptional Education testing and qualification.
Dropout	Students enrolled in school, any time during the school year, but are not enrolled at the end of the school year and did not transfer or graduate.
Dropout Rate	A rate calculated for grades seven through twelve by ADE, based on a calendar year that runs from the first day of summer recess through the last day of school. A school’s total enrollment is used as the population figure against which dropouts are subsequently counted.
SAIS	Student Accountability Information System is the Arizona Department of

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	Education's system for monitoring student movement from school to school throughout the State of Arizona. Each enrolling student is given a SAIS number which attaches to the student's name.
Student Attendance Codes	The Arizona Department of Education has developed codes which reference a student's current educational status.
Mojave	The current Student Information System used by TUSD.
Arizona College and Career Ready Standards	Based on the National Common Core Standards, Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards, were adopted in 2010. Schools began implementing the standards during the 2013 school year. Pilot testing will begin in Spring of 2014 and full implementation expected for SY 14-15.
LSASP	The Life Skills Alternative to Suspension Program is an alternative education placement for students that are long term suspended from school between 20-45 days.
Watch Point	TUSD's pilot data dashboard system to ensure that students who (i) fall below a particular academic threshold, (ii) go above a certain threshold of absences, or (iii) receive a certain threshold number of disciplinary consequences or referrals, are flagged and referred to the student services resources identified.

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Plan includes the following preliminary sections: USP Language; Overview; Definitions; and Executive Summary. The Plan includes the following main sections:

- I. FINDINGS OF STUDENT SUPPORT REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT PLAN
- II. ANNUAL GOALS AND PROGRESS MONITORING
- III. IDENTIFICATION AND MONITORING OF STUDENTS
- IV. SUPPORT AND INTERVENTION
  - A. GRADUATION SUPPORT SERVICES
  - B. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
  - C. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- V. CONSULTATION WITH NATIONAL EXPERTS
- VI. NATIONAL RESEARCH

### **I. FINDINGS OF THE STUDENT SUPPORT REVIEW AND ASSESSMENT (SSRA)**

#### **A. Analysis**

The Student Support Review and Assessment (SSRA) team was comprised of central personnel from various departments, site-personnel, and principals from all levels. The SSRA team used a comprehensive approach to identify additional resources or programs that may be needed, and to identify the highest concentration of students in need of such programs and resources. The team analyzed data from multiple sources including:

- student achievement data (by grade and by school);
- resource, program, practices data from the school survey;
- human resource vacancy data; and
- an assessment of the needs of individual sites to identify high-needs sites (using academic, behavioral, and attendance indicators)<sup>3</sup>

The SSRA team had a 100 percent return from all sites regarding surveys and other information requested. The team also considered implementation of state academic standards, increased

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<sup>3</sup> Needs Assessment. For each student currently at the school with a standardized score (AIMS by preference, Stanford 10 if AIMS is unavailable) from the previous year, a determination first is made if the individual student is already at the mastery level required by their current (not previous year) grade. If not, the difference between their “current” (Spring 2013) level and their needed level is computed. These differences then can be aggregated, averaged, etc, so that we can speak of the “Total Need” and “Average Need” for both a school and for each racial/ethnic group at the school, as well as the percentage of students who have a need. This is accomplished separately for both Reading and Math.

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academic rigor as required under proposed state assessments, and research regarding effective educational practice. The preponderance of data reveals that the greatest academic need and gate-keeper for successful matriculation within and beyond the District is student achievement in mathematics.

## **B. Recommendations**

### **1. Increase Mathematics Supports**

After an analysis of the needs assessment, the team saw a greater need for supports in the area of mathematics. Schools have a variety of resources and supports for students K – 12 in reading, but limited resources were provided focusing on math.

### **2. Provide Additional Instruction and Supports in Non-Traditional Ways**

- Provide Saturday School (Academy)
- Extend the school day for our neediest schools. These additional hours of instruction must be filled with quality instruction that is targeted for students' needs.
- Extended Year for schools using the intercessions to provide additional support opportunities.
- Research and identify different ways for students to engage in credit recovery opportunities.
- Provide a standardized curriculum throughout the District to ensure continuity for the District's highly-mobile student population.

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**II. ANNUAL GOALS AND PROGRESS MONITORING**

Students drop out of school for many reasons, and no matter how proactive a school district is or how good its schools and support programs are, no school or district will ever completely eliminate dropouts (and thus, will not be able to raise graduation rates to 100%). The research, as well as our experience and data in the District, shows that the majority of students who either drop out or fail to graduate on time do so because they are failing their classes and not accumulating enough credits toward graduation. Thus, to effectively raise the graduation rate and reduce the dropout rate, the District will apply strategies that identify (and identify as early as possible) students who are struggling or failing classes, and provide them with academic support and credit recovery options so they can stay on track, or get back on track, toward on-time graduation. The following goals are based on the assumption that the District can effectively address this root cause (students not accumulating enough credits in a timely manner), and should help all students while specifically targeting African American and Hispanic students, including ELLs.

**A. Four-Year Graduation Rates<sup>4</sup>**

The District will work to increase the four-year graduation rate for all 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Specifically, for African-American and Hispanic students, the goal is to increase the four-year graduation rates by 3% (not 3 percentage points) in SY 2014-15 – as compared to the four-year graduation rates from SY 2013-14. This goal is reasonably calculated to reduce disparities by race and ethnicity, to the extent practicable, by SY 2017-18. This goal will be evaluated and adjusted annually based upon the data. The baseline data is as follows:

Year	White	AfAm	Hisp	NatAm	Asian	MR	Total
2012-13	85%	76%	74%	59%	80%	82%	77%

For example, if at the end of SY 2013-14, the African American Four-Year Graduation Rate is 75%, the goal for the end of SY 2014-15 would be 77.25%, an increase of 3% (75 + (75 x 3%)).

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<sup>4</sup> Each student that enters high school grade is assigned to an expected graduation year (“cohort year”) that is calculated to be four years after their entry to high school. The “Four-Year Graduation Rate” is the number of students who successfully graduate by their “cohort year” divided by the total number of students who graduate plus students who drop out plus students who are still enrolled but have not yet graduated.

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**B. Dropout Rates**

The District will work to decrease the dropout rate for all 7<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Specifically, for African-American and Hispanic students, the initial goal is to decrease the dropout rate by 10% in SY 2014-15 – as compared to the dropout rates from SY 2013-14. This goal is reasonably calculated to reduce disparities by race and ethnicity, to the extent practicable, by SY 2017-18. This goal will be evaluated and adjusted annually based upon the data. The baseline data is as follows:

Year	White	AfAm	Hisp	NatAm	Asian	MR	Total
2012-13	1.9%	2.6%	2.5%	4.8%	0.4%	2.9%	2.3%

For example, if at the end of SY 2013-14, the African American dropout rate is 2.5%, the goal for the end of SY 2014-15 would be 2.25%, a decrease of 10% ( $2.5 - (2.5 \times 10\%)$ ).

**C. Reducing In-Grade Retention Rates (K-8)**

The District will work to decrease the in-grade retention rate for all K – 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Taking into account that the in-grade retention rate for Hispanic students as compared to White students reveals no disparity, no specific goal is being set for SY 2014-15 for Hispanic students. However, for African-American students, the initial goal is to decrease the in-grade retention rate by 10% in SY 2014-15 – as compared to the in-grade retention rate from SY 2013-14. This goal is reasonably calculated to reduce disparities by race and ethnicity, to the extent practicable, by SY 2017-18. Goals will be evaluated and adjusted annually based upon the data. The baseline data is as follows:

Year	White	AfAm	Hisp	NatAm	Asian	MR	Total
2012-13	0.9%	1.2%	0.9%	1.3%	0.4%	1.5%	0.9%

For example, if at the end of SY 2013-14, the African American in-grade retention rate is 1%, the goal for the end of SY 2014-15 would be 0.9%, a decrease of 10% ( $1.0 - (1.0 \times 10\%)$ ).

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**D. Attendance Rates**

The District will work to increase attendance rates for all K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. Specifically, for African-American students, the initial goal is to increase attendance rates by .05% in SY 2014-15 – as compared to the attendance rates from SY 2013-14. For Hispanic students, the initial goal is to increase attendance rates by .2% in SY 2014-15 – as compared to the attendance rates from SY 2013-14. These goals are reasonably calculated to reduce disparities by race and ethnicity, to the extent practicable, by SY 2017-18. Goals will be evaluated and adjusted annually based upon the data. The baseline data is as follows:

Year	White	AfAm	Hisp	NatAm	Asian	MR	Total
2012-13	92.10%	91.68%	90.83%	88.68%	94.45%	91.21%	2012-13

For example, if at the end of SY 2013-14, the Hispanic attendance rate is 90%, the goal for the end of SY 2014-15 would be 90.18%, an increase of .2% ( $90 + (90 \times .2\%)$ ).

**E. Progress Monitoring**

Centrally, a committee (including representatives from Student Support Services, Curriculum and Instruction, Dropout Prevention, Student Equity, and Family Engagement) shall have responsibility for quarterly monitoring of Plan implementation and progress, and for reviewing annual goals yearly. In addition, each school will have an MTSS team (discussed in detail below) that also is involved in progress monitoring, and also shall have responsibility for quarterly monitoring of Plan implementation and progress, and for reviewing annual goals. When issues are identified during the central monitoring process, the central committee will collaborate with the appropriate MTSS site-based team to address the concerns.

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### **III. IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK STUDENTS**

In SY 2013-14, the District has been piloting automatic identification of students for interventions (using a system in Mojave called WatchPoint) based on criteria in three areas: 1) grades; 2) overall attendance; and 3) behavior. Based on the first semester data, analysis has revealed that student identification based on the academic threshold of “two Fs” is over-identifying students, particularly at the high schools, while the “3 days of unexcused absences per week” threshold is only identifying very few students as having attendance problems. The changes to the discipline code enacted in 2013-14 also seem to have reduced the number of out-of-school suspensions compared to previous years.

Based on this data, and on observing best practices in other school districts, the District will make the following changes to its practices for identifying students in need of intervention for SY 2014-15:

- 1) Use individual course absence data, not overall absence data, for middle and high school students
- 2) Combine the individual course absence data with the grades data and only automatically identify students who are failing a course **and** excessively not attending a course
- 3) Continue to use behavior data to identify students automatically
- 4) Explore adding other sources of data to enhance automatic identification, including benchmark and other standardized tests
- 5) Align automatic student identification with the MTSS (Multi-Tier System of Support) so the automatic identification will help to place students into either tier two or tier three support

The District will continue to refine the WatchPoint system to ensure that the data points are identifying “At Risk” students and interventions are being implemented.

Based on the SSRA and other research (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007) (Heppen & Therriault, 2008), the District will implement specific supports and interventions for identified “At-Risk” students. The District will also focus specific supports and interventions for schools whose data supports the need for additional assistance (see fn 1, above). By targeting supports and interventions, the District will seek to meet the goals stated above.

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#### **IV. SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS**

The District conducted a thorough review of the research related to the best-practices for addressing dropouts (See Section VI below, National Research). The following three areas surfaced as having the greatest potential for mitigating dropout rates:

- Graduation Support Systems - direct support to students (pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Family Engagement - outreach to families to provide indirect support to students
- Professional Development - support for teachers designed to result in higher student achievement

A key element of this Plan is the Multi-Tiered System Support (MTSS) model. However, the Plan also includes specific strategies targeted for specific grade spans of students, and for the transitions of students between grade spans, including: High School (Ninth Grade); High School (All Grades); Middle School; and Elementary School.

##### **A. Graduation Support Systems**

Direct support to students will be implemented as early as third grade. The supports will address those indicators identified by researchers (Kennelly & Monrad, 2007) as highly correlated to students most likely to drop out, as follows: poor grades in core subjects; low attendance; in-grade retention; and disengagement from school (including behavioral problems). At all grade levels, timely intervention will occur either within the school day, during an extended day opportunity, or in summer to avoid grade level retentions.

##### All Schools:

- 1. Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) in SY 2013-14 (See Appendix A).** MTSS is a multi-tiered approach to providing services and interventions to students at increasing levels of intensity based on progress monitoring and data analysis. The MTSS model is implemented by the classroom teacher with the assistance of the school-based MTSS Support Team and District-level support to ensure fidelity. This systemic way of providing tiered intervention will ensure support for African American and Latino students in need of intervention. The MTSS system will use data from the the WatchPoint System (Early Identification System) to intervene with issues of behavior, attendance, and academics.

The MTSS process includes all students and will address the specific needs of ELLs and recently reclassified ELLs to provide supports for language and literacy development. The MTSS intervention will be provided during the four hour ELD block (not additional pull-out time) for ELLs specifically.

- 2. School wide academic and behavioral intervention support plans.** Each school's plan will provide targeted support for African American and Latino students, including ELL students, who are identified as at risk of dropping out. Each plan must provide for the establishment of a school-wide MTSS team. Principals (in conjunction with the designated MTSS site coordinator) will establish MTSS teams by submitting team

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member names to their immediate supervisors no later than September 1 each year<sup>5</sup>. MTSS teams, facilitated by a site administrator, will plan and provide for targeted support and interventions for identified students.

3. **Standardized curriculum.** The District will provide standardized curriculum throughout all schools at all levels, due to mobility. Development of standardized curriculum will begin in the spring of 2014.
4. **Language Accessible Social Workers** – The District will continue to provide Social Workers at targeted schools with high population of students at risk at all academic levels using the integrated Social Worker model. In an integrated model, social workers will be trained to be able to provide and document services. Social work services include, but are not limited to, individual and group counseling with students and families, community resource and referral for students and families, coordination of community services and school services, crisis intervention for students and families, supporting school staff in understanding and providing mental health services, seeking and coordinating community mental health services to be provided in schools, conferencing with school staff regarding student needs, follow up social work services for issues raised at restorative circles or other student and/or parent administrative interactions, parenting education, and support of school wide PBIS programs.

#### High School (Ninth Grade)

Ninth grade is often considered a pivotal year for students. More students fail in ninth grade than any other high school grade, and a disproportionate number of students who fail courses in ninth grade are more likely to drop out (Herlihy, 2007). With that in mind, support for identified African American and Latino students, including ELL students, must be systemic for freshmen. Recommendations include:

1. **The delivery of *Step By Step* to the 8<sup>th</sup> graders at each middle school.** *Step By Step* is an interactive program that assists students transitioning into high school. Concepts discussed include: grades, credits, absences, and how they all tie together; what to do if you are falling behind: who to talk to for advice; credit recovery options; finding a niche; keeping track of your progress and the importance of “Every Day, Every Class, On Time”.
2. **Pilot a summer bridge program for incoming ninth graders.** By using 8<sup>th</sup> grade data to identify African American and Latino students, including ELL students, who are at risk for dropping out, connections can be made to students earlier, prior to students

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<sup>5</sup> The MTSS team may consist of teachers, District resources and support personnel, academic specialists, school site interventionists, RPPCs, counselors, college career coordinators, community representatives, nurses, admin representatives, social workers and case managers. At high schools, registrars may be included, as well as dropout prevention staff. This team should consist of people who are seen as leaders and represent a variety of subject areas and grade levels.

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failing classes. The focus of the summer program will be both an introduction to the expectations of high school as well as a math focus to address gaps in content knowledge.

- 3. Organize high school classes for freshmen into smaller communities or teams.** Wherever possible, students should be placed with teams of teachers (math, science, English, etc.) Teaming provides a greater level of support for students, allowing teachers to share common concerns and strategies to address student needs.
- 4. Pilot a program to use 8<sup>th</sup> grade data to place students in need of math support in a two hour block of algebra/algebra support.** In districts nationwide, as many as 50% of students fail Algebra I the first time and must repeat it—some more than once. These struggling students often end up behind in gaining needed requirements for graduation and college, and are at greater risk of dropping out. The recommendation to double-block Algebra for struggling math students (provide a companion math class) is to provide comprehensive math intervention for an extended-time class to help students who are significantly behind become successful in Algebra within one academic year. Central to the pilot program is the idea that struggling students need a powerful combination of additional time, a challenging curriculum, and cohesive, targeted supports and interventions. With these tools and teaching supports in place, students can stay on track, graduate on time, and gain passage to advanced learning.

For this reason, the Curriculum and Instruction Office will work to develop a curriculum to be piloted in the 2015-2016 school year that will provide seamless instructional support for a two-hour block of time. The District will specifically target 8<sup>th</sup> graders who are falling far below the standards based on their last statewide assessment performance. The scope of implementation after the 2015-2016 will be determined upon review and evaluation of the impact of the curriculum on actual student performance.

### High School

Through a review of data and current practices, this Plan addresses the varied approaches to improving graduation found at individual high school campuses. This Plan explicitly focuses on the development of coherent and comprehensive systems to improve graduation rates to be implemented at all high schools. Effective research-based systems to support graduation rates are essential vehicles for reducing dropout rates.

1. In general, research suggests that students who attend school any less than 90% of the time are cause for concern (Allensworth and Easton, 2007). Dropout coordinators will be assigned to each school to monitor and address student attendance issues. Dropout coordinators will collaborate with the Academic and Behavioral Supports Coordinator (ABSC) to ensure that specified strategies are being implemented to reduce dropout, increase graduation, and focus school and District resources on working with students whose patterns of attendance, classroom performance, or other individual challenges indicate a serious risk of dropping out. According to Governing Board Policy JE, students who have 10 or more absences earn no credit for a class. Dropout coordinators will be responsible for implementing a tiered system of intervention at 3 and 6 absences to help

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students and families understand the importance of good attendance. Dropout coordinators will ensure that families understand the Governing Board policy related to how a student might lose credits and, if they do, how the appeals process works.

2. The District will provide continual training on the District's student credit tracking system (personnel, data base, etc.) to ensure that students, families, and school staff are able to monitor progress towards graduation.
3. All students will develop an Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) that includes personalized information on high school graduation.
4. Credit recovery options will be offered in a variety of ways to include during the regular school day, in an extended day format (0 or 7<sup>th</sup> period), on the weekend (TUSD Weekend Academy), online (Agave or Grad Link 2) and during the summer. ELL and recently reclassified ELL students will be given priority for Credit Recovery before/after school and during the summer, allowing students to take courses in their primary language if it is available.
5. Whenever possible, students who have difficulty mastering key concepts will be offered an opportunity to participate in structured concept recovery. Re-teaching may occur after school, during class (if time is allocated for enrichment/intervention), or on weekends. Students who participate in concept recovery, and show mastery of key concepts, will receive a corresponding acknowledgement for the concept attainment via a corresponding grade change (rather than retaking the entire course).
6. A school-within-a-school concept for credit deficient students will be explored. Using semester data, students who have failed classes or enrolled without transfer grades may be given the option of placement in a self-contained class to work on credit attainment under different time structures. For example, instead of earning credit by attending a class for one hour per day for 18 weeks, students may work four hours per day for four weeks to complete a course instead. This alternative may also serve students who have difficulty with focusing on multiple classes at one time.
7. ELL Students - The District is using the information from the curriculum audit to address the need for improvement of Tier 1 instruction during the ELD block to make the curriculum more engaging and increase the level of rigor. A focus of the block will be on academic literacy with an emphasis on reading and writing strategies to help students to be successful in core subjects.
8. The district will provide information on various alternative school placements (Agave, Project More, and TAPP) for students that are unsuccessful in the comprehensive high school.

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9. The district will begin to explore quarterly credit options for students so they may gain partial credits, rather than an all or none option.

### Middle School

The District will provide support for students transitioning from elementary to middle school by providing a Parent Meeting for incoming 6<sup>th</sup> graders, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Bridge Program and Core Plus Academic Intervention Program

1. **Organize middle school classes into smaller communities or teams.** Wherever possible, students should be placed with teams of teachers (Math, Science, English, and Social Studies.) Teaming provides a greater level of support for students, allowing teachers to share common concerns and strategies to address student needs.
2. **Dropout prevention support.** In general, research suggests that students who attend school any less than 90% of the time are cause for concern (Allensworth and Easton, 2007). The District will assign dropout prevention support to middle schools with low student attendance, who will assist with monitoring attendance, addressing student attendance issues, and working with families on the importance of attendance in school.
3. **Parent meetings.** As students move from elementary school to middle school the transition can be stressful for not only students, but parents as well. Each school in the spring will provide a Parents Informational Meeting for all incoming students for the following school year. Administrators and staff will share important information about the new school. This will provide parents and guardians an opportunity to meet administrators and key staff on the middle school campus.
4. **6<sup>th</sup> Grade Bridge Program.** Transitions can be difficult for everyone, but for young people one of the most difficult transitions is the one from elementary to middle school. At the same time that young adolescents are adapting to a multitude of cognitive changes, they suddenly enter new educational environments that typically are less nurturing, larger, and more departmentalized (e.g., going from one classroom to another). Middle school students generally are expected to be more independent and responsible for their own assignments as well as other commitments. At the end of SY 14-15, a selected number of schools will host a summer bridge program. The Summer Bridge Program would provide students with supports such as: learning and organizational skills, skills from AVID, Metacognitive study skills, and daily middle routines.
5. **Core Plus.** The Core Plus Academic Intervention Program goal is to provide rigorous Tier 2 academic interventions to low academic performing Latino and African-American 6<sup>th</sup> graders to decrease retention and dropout rates in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The program objective is to increase Standardized test scores of students enrolled in the program *and* increase Standardized test scores at the middle school level. This is accomplished by identifying 6<sup>th</sup> grade students below grade level from across the District, enrolling them in the program but maintaining their middle school registration, and providing academic intervention with a focus on math and reading in, currently, two self-contained

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classrooms with low teacher to student ratios. The classrooms are dispersed geographically across the District.

- 6. Summer School.** At the end of SY 14-15 a selected number of schools will host a summer school program for those individuals at risk of being retained for failing Math and Language Arts/Reading. Students in need of extra assistance in math or reading and could be “At Risk” but did not fail in Math or Language Arts/Reading would be able to attend the Summer School program as well for extra support.

Positive Alternative to Suspension (middle school and high school)

The Life Skills Alternative to Suspension Program, LSASP allows long-term suspended students to receive academic and social instruction by a certified teacher instead of kids serving out the suspension unsupervised at home; in the streets; or in some cases, in juvenile hall.

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### Elementary School

Using the MTSS system, schools will develop student support plans in both reading and math. Interventions will be provided during the regular school day. Additional after school support will be provided, as feasible.

- 1. Master Schedule.** The District will create a master schedule for all elementary schools. The schedule will define the time required each day for Reading, Writing, and Math. By standardizing instructional time the students will be able to receive instruction in all core areas beginning at elementary school building a strong foundation for future success. This schedule will be developed by the District for SY 2014-15.
- 2. Focus on Early Literacy.** A study released in 2011 by the **American Educational Research Association** claims that a student who cannot read on grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is four times less likely to graduate by age 19 than a child who does read proficiently by that time. Add poverty to the mix, and a student is 13 times less likely to graduate on time than his or her proficient, wealthier peer. In order to ensure that all 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students are reading at grade level, the district will be focusing much of its literacy efforts on early grades. The District literacy team will conduct trainings on Reading Foundations which include the basic early literacy skills. The trainings provide the knowledge and skills necessary to implement effective reading strategies/practices through TUSD's Integrated Literacy Continuum which includes: ELA AZCCRS, Planning, Instructing, Intervening and Assessing. Additional trainings will include the District selected research-based diagnostic, *Assessing Reading Multiple Measures* by CORE, to assist staff with an assessment tool that supports focused instruction to close reading gaps. TUSD will provide on-going professional development support for implementation.

The District will continue to gather preliminary data to monitor "At Risk" students and will provide targeted intervention and additional support. The District will provide training for Student Support services to assist teachers during tier 1 instruction.

- 3. Preschools.** The District will continue to offer high-quality preschool programs in schools with large populations of African American and Latino Students, and will provide Infant and Early Learning Centers (IELCs). Both preschool models will better prepare students academically, not just socially, for the expectations of common core using a research-based curriculum designed for preschool-aged students.

Early opportunities for students have shown to have a great impact on future student success. The District is committed to focusing on students in pre-K and in early grades to keep students with their grade cohort. Preschools support a key component of dropout and retention prevention by providing opportunities for the early identification of learning problems and access to quality academic programs for young students.

### **B. Family Engagement**

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The District values the family as the first and most important teacher and partner in the education of students. To empower families to better support academic achievement, the District will provide language accessible training for all personnel involved in family engagement initiatives, and implement the Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) Structure to address family engagement at all schools.

#### Tier 1

1. All Elementary Schools will provide informational sessions to parents at least twice per year (minimum once per semester) regarding curricular focus. A required element of these trainings for parents will be specific strategies along with providing materials/tools for families to employ at home to support student achievement in reading and/or mathematics using a model such as Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT). These events may be held during parent conferencing and/or other times.
2. All schools will hold regular ‘Parent Academies’ run by well-trained parent leaders to provide parents with the skills necessary to support their children’s academic success and to provide a forum for continuous feedback on District-related initiatives.

#### Tier 2

1. Quarterly educational meetings will be held at all TUSD Schools. These sessions will inform parents of the programs and opportunities available for students. All family engagement staff and specialists assigned to schools will work collaboratively on quarterly meetings at their respective sites. The focus of the parent quarterly sessions shall be to enhance and support relationships as well as the academic success of students especially identified at-risk students in an interactive engaging format. These quarterly events will be supported, facilitated and organized by site staff:
  - Site Title I Family Engagement Staff at assigned sites
  - Site Staff including Administrators, Certified, & Classified
  - District Student Support Staff

These quarterly events will be leveraged to be informational and will include at least two types of documented additional outreach and support for opportunities for Latino and African American families (supported by staff, direct mailings, etc. identified in other areas of this plan) and include topics such as:

- Advanced Learning Experiences
- Graduation, Matriculation & Student Retention
- Parent University Conferences
- Parent/Family Engagement Leadership & Partnerships
- Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education
- Academic Recognition Nights,
- Academic Parent Teacher Teams
- Individual Data Talks

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- Parental Stats Informational Sessions
- Standardize informational Sessions
- Provide math training for parents focusing on working with students on math concepts

Schools will endeavor to provide recognition/celebrations to students in non-traditional ways. These may include celebrating improvements in academics (most improved ...), learning habits and behaviors (improved attendance, greatest improvement/reduction in tardies), and others. In order to maximize parent participation, these sessions will take place outside of the school day and should be connected to student related events within a positive supportive environment.

Families of students with disabilities will be supported through Tiers 1 & 2. Additional family support and outreach will be provided by a dedicated staff member who is under the supervision of the director of Exceptional Education. The role of this person is to provide advocacy training, education and support.

1. All TUSD departments and department staff including, Title I, Exceptional Education, Mexican American Student Services, African American Student Services, Native American Student Services, Asian Pacific Student Services, Language Acquisition, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Schools, Pre-school, Drop-out Prevention, and School Community Services will work together to implement a cohesive plan for every school in TUSD.
2. Coordinated and targeted parent outreach will be conducted by support staff of all Student Support Department for identified at-risk students using a multi-tier approach.

Tier 1 - Families of identified at-risk students will receive outreach from TUSD staff most closely aligned to students' identified demographic or academic need as possible.

Tier 2 – Site staff will access the District's Student Equity and Intervention Request for Service referral form to coordinate and communicate specific outreach needs. <http://intranet/interventionform.asp>. In all cases materials and information will be provided in a language accessible manner.

Tier 3 - Outreach to at-risk families will be conducted to encourage attendance and engagement at site and District quarterly events will include direct mailing(s) and phone calls to targeted families. This outreach will be coordinated between school and District resource staff including Title I family engagement & Central Program staff. Title I site staff will provide targeted outreach with assistance of special population staff that will provide outreach to their populations.

The District will develop and use social media structures to connect with students and families in contemporary fashion. This may include Parent Link, Facebook, text messaging, media-based parent training and events and others. Family engagement activities and communication and outreach may include:

- Provide webinar sessions for parent trainings linked to school websites.

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- Provide math websites for parents such as Khan Academy, and Family Meal Time Program.
- Strategies for parent student interactions in newsletters.
- Inspirational texts or quotes for families to discuss.
- Administrative newsletter and website communications for parents and students.

**C. Professional Development:**

The following strategies will be implemented to support professional development:

1. Professional development for certificated staff will address two major components.
  - a. Developing a positive school climate, a common element in successful dropout prevention programs. This training will be required of all teachers. Through the training, teachers will be expected to better understand the students that they serve and acquire the cultural competency skills necessary to implement practices that will effectively engage a diverse population of students. Specifically, teachers will be provided with a menu of strategies for differentiating the learning experiences of students in their classroom for the purpose of improving student performance and academic achievement. The Teacher Evaluation Instrument will be enhanced to include Cultural Competency Indicators that will better inform the evaluators on how to best support teacher improvement in this critical area.
  - b. Ensuring that teachers are able to provide instruction in reading and math that is rigorous and consistent with quality first instruction. With the implementation of the Arizona College and Career Ready Standards in place for the cohort of 2017, all teachers must have the instructional knowledge to support instruction including a renewed emphasis on writing skills and the ability to read expository text. Based on the needs assessments of the schools, there is also a significant need for math support. Curriculum facilitators, working at the school site, will provide the necessary support for reading, writing and math achievement by analyzing student data and working with teachers to ensure a high standard for instruction in these areas.
2. The District will provide training once a semester on the District's student credit tracking system (personnel, data base, etc.) to ensure that students, families, and school staff are able to monitor progress towards graduation.
3. The District literacy team will conduct trainings on Reading Foundations which include the basic early literacy skills. The trainings provide the knowledge and skills necessary to implement effective reading strategies/practices through TUSD's Integrated Literacy Continuum which includes: ELA AZCCRS, Planning, Instructing, Intervening and Assessing. Additional trainings will include the District selected research-based diagnostic, *Assessing Reading Multiple Measures* by CORE, to assist staff with an assessment tool that supports focused instruction to close reading gaps. TUSD will provide on-going professional development support for implementation.

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4. The District will provide training for Student Support services to assist teachers during tier 1 instruction.
5. The District will continue to provide on going training to all administrators and LSC on the MTSS system with a specific focus on data gathering and data analysis. Administrators and LSC will provide training to staff at sites on the MTSS system in order to effectively implement its design.
6. The District will provide quarterly training for Attendance Accounting Staff (and other staff involved in changing student attendance codes) in high and middle schools. The purpose behind this training is to eradicate in-house errors that create dropouts and speed up the record keeping process. Familiarizing Attendance Accounting Staff with ADE policies will help to alleviate SAIS bounce-backs from the ADE.
7. The District will provide quarterly professional development opportunities for support staff in academic support for reading, writing, and math.

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## **V. CONSULTATION WITH NATIONAL EXPERTS**

The District has conducted extensive research on dropout prevention strategies, methods, and practices. Additionally, the District worked to align the Plan with the African American Academic Achievement Task Force (AAAATF) recommendations, and incorporated the recommendations that resulted from consultation with national experts Dr. Bob Peterkin and Dr. Wade Boykin, including the following recommendations:

2. Identify and Replicate Successful Teacher Practices.
4. Monitor and Implement Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) (aka “Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices”) through the Supportive and Inclusive Learning (SAIL) training.
5. Develop Focused Professional Development
11. Monitor Recommendations for Placement to Remedial and/or Exceptional Education Programs
12. Evaluate Support Programs
14. Monitor Disciplinary Actions
15. Enhance the Parent Engagement Program
16. Develop and Implement Extended Learning Opportunities

Further, the District has consulted with Jerry Weast during the development and review of this Plan and the District has incorporated his feedback into this document.

Finally, the District will seek to collaborate with any or all of the following national experts and/or organizations during the initial implementation phase between the spring of 2014 and the start of SY 2014-15 (*See Appendix B*):

1. The Equity Assistance Center at WestEd
2. Dr. Bob Peterkin
3. Dr. Louie Rodriguez
4. Dr. Pedro Noguera
5. Dr. Jerry Weast
6. Dr. Rose Owens West

## **VI. NATIONAL RESEARCH**

1. Heppen & Therriault, 2008, **Developing Early Warning Systems to Identify Potential High School Dropouts**, [betterhighschools.org](http://betterhighschools.org)
2. Kennelly & Monrad, 2007, **Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs With Appropriate Interventions**, [betterhighschools.org](http://betterhighschools.org)
3. Allensworth and Easton, 2007, What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools
4. Proven Strategies from the OSEP Positive Behavior Support and Interventions website: [www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)<<http://www.pbis.org>>

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Over the past 30 years, a clearly defined research-validated literature base exists on effective classroom management practice (Alberto and Troutman, 1998; Charles, 1995; Colvin and Lazar, 1997; Kame'enui and Darch, 1995; Kerr and Nelson, 1998; Sugai and Tindal, 1993).

5. Research and information from National Dropout Prevention Center/ Network
6. Institute of Education Sciences What Works Clearinghouse, Dropout Prevention, Practice Guide, August 2008
7. Early Warning System Implementation Guide by Susan Bowles Therriault, Jessica Heppen, Mindee O'Cummings, Lindsay Fryer, and Amy Johnson

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