



Tucson Unified School District

**Revised Dropout Prevention and Graduation Plan
(Dropout and Retention Plan)
January 30, 2015
(re-revised March 13, 2015)**

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, 2013¹, 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, 2013², 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.

¹ 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).

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

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

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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 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

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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.

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 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.

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

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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)³

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 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.

³ 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.

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.

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 Rates⁴

The District will work to increase the four-year graduation rate for all 12th 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 by SY 2017-18. This goal will be evaluated and adjusted annually based upon the data.

⁴ 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.

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 x 1.03)).

The District will work to increase the four-year graduation rate for all 12th grade ELL students.

Specifically, the goal for the end of SY 2014-15 would be to increase the number of African-American ELL students graduating by 100%, and to increase the number of Latino ELL students graduating by 50% as compared to SY 2013-14; or to increase the graduation rate by 10 percentage points – whichever is higher. In addition, when analyzing the ELL data, we will consider reclassified ELLs when evaluating progress towards ELL goals.

It is important to consider both options as the number within a cohort may change throughout the year. Another important factor to consider is that every year's cohort of ELL seniors has different English proficiency levels (and different proficiency levels in varying core subjects). Also, the District will continue to track the Five-Year Graduation Rate for all students. The District will then extract from the data the five-year graduation rates for subgroups including ELL students. Five year graduation rates are a more appropriate measure for students who (a) may not even be proficient in English *and* have to take the 4 hour block, and (b) may not have not been in TUSD for most or all of their education careers (some are refugees, some come from other districts, etc.)

B. Dropout Rates

The District will work to decrease the dropout rate for all 7th - 12th grade students for the SY 2014-15 by .2% for African American and Latino students. In 2012-13, the dropout rates were 1.8%, 2.5%, and 2.5% for White, African-American, and Hispanic students respectively. The dropout rates in SY 2013-14 were 1.9%, 2.2% and 2.0% for White, African-American, and Hispanic students respectively. The revised goal of a .2% decrease in dropouts for both groups in SY 2014-15 would reduce the disparity further (or eliminate it). This goal will be evaluated and adjusted annually based upon the data. The District will work to decrease the dropout rate for all 7th - 12th grade ELL students. Specifically, for African-American and Hispanic 7th – 12th grade ELL students, the goal is to maintain a dropout rate that is lower than each group's non-ELL dropout rate for each given year. This goal is reasonably calculated to reduce disparities by race and ethnicity by SY 2016-17.

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

The District will work to decrease the in-grade retention rate for all African American and Latino students in grades K – 8. 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 2016-17. For Latino students, the initial goal is to decrease the in-grade retention by 50% in grades 3 and 8 when compared to Anglo (White) students. Goals will be

evaluated and adjusted annually based upon the data. The baseline data is as follows (For grade-level data, see Appendix V-40 of the 2013-14 Annual Report):

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% ($1.0 - (1.0 \times 10\%)$).

D. Attendance Rates

The District will work to increase attendance rates for all K – 12th 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 .6% 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 above mentioned percentages were selected based on the disparities that exist in the attendance rate for each subgroup of students per the chart below. 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%	91.21%

For example, if at the end of SY 2013-14, the Hispanic attendance rate is 90.75%, the goal for the end of SY 2014-15 would be 91.35% an increase of .6%.

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.

III. IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK STUDENTS

In SY 2013-14, the District piloted an automatic identification of students for interventions (using a system in Mojave called Watch Point) based on criteria in three areas: 1) grades; 2) overall attendance; and 3) behavior. Based on the collected data, and on observations of 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 through the MTSS process:

- 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 identify students who are failing a course **and** excessively not attending a course (for example, students who are absent for more than 10 days).
- 3) Continue to use behavior data (i.e., discipline referrals, In-School-Suspension and Out-of-School Suspensions) to identify at-risk students.
- 4) Explore adding other sources of data to enhance identification of at-risk students, 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 automatic student identification 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.

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 12th 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.

K-12 Strategies:

- 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 Watch Point 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, and for African American and Latino ELL students, who are identified as students who are 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 member names to their immediate supervisors no later than September 1 each year⁵. 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 continue in SY 2014-15.
4. **Language Accessible Social Workers.** The District will continue to provide Social Workers at targeted schools with a 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. (These positions have been, and will continue to be, funded from 910(G) funds).
5. **ELL Transportation.** Allow for ELLs whose families move into another attendance area to be given an option of staying at their home school for the current school year, and be provided bus passes for transportation.
6. **Home Visits.** The District will implement the use of home visits at each site, and when feasible with Student Support Services and Dropout Prevention Teams, to reduce the likelihood of a student dropping out of school.
7. **Steps to Success.** The District will implement an annual Steps to Success student reengagement program to encourage students to return to school. This annual event will focus on middle and high school students. Steps to Success is designed to make home

⁵ 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.

visits to students who have dropped out of school, or are in serious jeopardy of dropping out of school. As part of this process, a Steps to Success – Success Center will be established for students to reengage in school.

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. Pilot a summer bridge program for incoming ninth graders.** By using 8th 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 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. If implemented, data will be collected to show the effectiveness of this program. The District will evaluate current bridge programs to determine effectiveness and cost-effectiveness
- 2. 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.
- 3. Pilot a program to use 8th 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, Instruction, PD, and Assessment Office will work to develop a curriculum to be piloted in the 2015-16 school year that will provide seamless instructional support for a two-hour block of time. The District will specifically target 8th graders who are falling far below the standards based on their last statewide assessment

performance, and pilot this strategy at one high school. 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. **Dropout Intervention Specialists.** 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 Intervention Specialists will be assigned to each high school to monitor and address student attendance issues. Dropout Intervention Specialists will collaborate with the Academic and Behavioral Supports Coordinators (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 Intervention Specialists will be responsible for implementing a tiered system of intervention at 3 and 6 absences to help students and families understand the importance of good attendance. Dropout Intervention Specialists 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. **Credit Tracking Training.** 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. **Education and Career Action Plans.** All students will develop an Education and Career Action Plan (ECAP) that includes personalized information on high school graduation. The Arizona State Board of Education approved Education and Career Action Plans for all Arizona students in grades 9-12. An ECAP (Education and Career Action Plan) reflects a student's current plan of coursework, career aspirations, and extended learning opportunities in order to develop the student's individual academic and career goals
4. **Credit Recovery Options.** 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 7th period), on the weekend (TUSD Weekend Academy), online (Agave or Grad Link 2) and during the summer. To determine the effectiveness of each credit recovery option, student coursework completion and data will be collected by the respective program coordinator.

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5. **Credit Recovery Priority for ELL/R-ELL Students.** 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.
6. **Increase ELL Participation in AGAVE.** Increase African-American and Hispanic ELL student participation in AGAVE state assessment courses (before/after school and during the summer). AGAVE provides rigorous, standards-based, quality curriculum in a virtual environment.
7. **Structured Concept Recovery.** 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).
8. **Improved Tier I Instruction for ELL Students.** The District is using the information from the curriculum audit to address the need for improvement of Tier I 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.
9. **Alternative Schools.** 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. To determine the effectiveness of each alternative option, student coursework completion and data will be collected by the respective program coordinator.
10. **Explore Quarterly Credit Options.** The District will continue to explore quarterly credit options for students so they may gain partial credits, rather than an all or none option.
11. **ELD I & II Classes for Pre-Emergent/Emergent & Basic Level ELLs.** The ELD I class includes Pre-Emergent and Emergent level students. It follows the ELD curriculum used during the school year in the areas of listening & speaking, reading, writing and grammar. The Pre-Emergent students may be new to English and to school; they may have very low literacy but strong oral skills and may be preliterate in their first language.

The ELD II class is for students who are moving from ELD Level I to ELD Level II and possibly from ELD Level I to ELD Level III. The curriculum focuses on each of the four domains: listening & speaking, reading, writing, and grammar. Special emphasis is placed on writing, moving students from writing sentences to longer pieces including

essays. Students receive one language arts credit for successful completion of these classes.

ELD I students only attend “hub” schools: Catalina, Rincon, Pueblo, and PaloVerde.

12. MTSS Math & Literature Intervention Classes for Intermediate Level ELLs and R-ELLs. These summer school classes are made up of high Basic to high Intermediate (Level III/IV) ELL students as well as Reclassified students, and it focuses on the skills needed to pass the math, reading, and writing exams required to pass the state assessment. Students rotate through each of the three areas of reading, writing and math, but those students who have already passed the state assessment in one or more section/s, receive concentrated help in the remaining areas. The class targets 11th and 12th grade students. Students receive one elective credit for successful completion of this class.

13. Sheltered Content Classes. Provide Sheltered Content Classes in Math for ELLs and former ELLs.

Middle School

- 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.** Wherever possible, Dropout Intervention Specialists will work with students at select middle schools. Specialist will assist schools with monitoring attendance, addressing student attendance issues, and working with families on the importance of attendance in school.
- 3. 6th 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 2015-16, 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.

4. **Core Plus.** This program is being implemented in SY 2014-15, and will be evaluated for effectiveness. The Core Plus Academic Intervention Program goal is to provide rigorous Tier 1 and Tier 2 academic interventions to low academic performing Latino and African-American 6th graders to decrease retention and dropout rates in the 8th grade. Sixth grade was chosen to help with transition from elementary school to middle school. Other middle grades were not selected due to cost restraints. 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 6th 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 classrooms with low teacher to student ratios. The classrooms are dispersed geographically across the District.
5. **Summer School.** At the end of SY 2014-15 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.
6. **Sheltered Content Classes.** Provide Sheltered Content Classes in math for ELLs and former ELLs. Our policy for TUSD / Language Acquisition is that all ELLs, regardless of language proficiency, take a math class every year. Regardless of proficiency level, ELLs participate in math because it is a four-year graduation requirement and the content is more accessible as it is not as language intensive as other core content classes
7. **Summer School for ELLs.** The District will offer ELD I and II as well as state assessment prep for Intermediate English-proficient students.

Positive Alternative to Suspension (high school and middle school grades)

The District’s alternatives to suspension will be implemented as a tiered-approach. The alternatives listed below are, generally, listed in the order that Administrators should consider.

Option 1: Restorative Conference: These can range from small impromptu circles where a few people meet to briefly address and resolve a problem to formal restorative conferences that address serious problems of behavior that may involve wrongdoers, victims, parents, and school administrators.

Option 2: Required Interventions: For all serious mid-range misbehaviors (misbehaviors coded at level 3 in the GSRR) such as fights or disorderly conduct, students may not be suspended unless interventions and/or restorative practices have first been used to redirect the student away from the misbehavior.

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Option 3: Abeyance Contracts: A student is placed on a behavior contract in place of some or all suspension days.

From the TUSD GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES (GSRR): An administrator may offer to not immediately impose the assigned out-of-school suspension if (1) the administrator believes it is in the best interest of the student and the school community, (2) the student admits to committing the infraction, (3) the student and parent/legal guardian agree to certain conditions, and (4) the student and parent/legal guardian sign a contract, called an abeyance contract. The term of the abeyance contract may not exceed the maximum suspension term for the offense level. If a student violates his/her abeyance contract with a suspendable offense, the student must serve the remaining term of the initial offense plus the suspension for the additional offense. These two suspensions would be served concurrently. (The last days of the first suspension would also be the first days of the additional suspension)

Option 4: In-School Intervention (ISI): The District's ISI will focus on students' academic, behavioral, and social/mental health concerns with a goal of promoting social and emotional learning to complement academic skills and encourage positive behavior. For an alternative to short term suspensions, students are placed with a certified staff member (either an administrator or teacher) who continues their instruction on an individual basis including counseling and problem solving education. The District will implement a "team" model whereby the certified staff member will collaborate with counselors, paraprofessionals, social workers, and/or the site's MTSS team. The District anticipates offering this alternative using a phased approach. This alternative will begin at every comprehensive high school (not including UHS) for SY 2015-16, and may expand to middle and K8 schools in SY 2016-17, for a total of 15-25 schools. Each student will have a 'success action plan' (exit plan) to transition each student from ISI back into the classroom. Social workers are key in collaborating with "local mental health, child welfare, law enforcement, and juvenile justice agencies and other stakeholders to align resources, prevention strategies, and intervention services." The plans would include a grade/transcript analysis, character-building, analysis of the students' social and/or family situation, etc... The team will work to engage the parents and/or families, and to follow up on the students' success action plan.

"[S]tudents who need to be removed from the regular classroom setting for even a short period of time should have access to an alternative program that provides comparable academic instruction to that provided to students in the regular school program."

Option 5: Life Skills: The Life Skills Alternative to Suspension Program (LSASP) allows long-term suspended students (more than ten days) to receive academic and social instruction by a certified teacher instead of students serving out the suspension unsupervised at home, in the streets, or in some cases, in juvenile hall. The model resembles the ISI model above but is implemented as a much more long-term engagement with the student.

Currently the Life Skill Alternative to Suspension Program (LSASP) is at Magee Middle School, Southwest Education Center (middle school and high school), and Whitmore Annex (high

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school). TUSD agrees to expand the District's efforts by restoring this program at Doolen Middle School.

The LSASP can support additional students beginning in 2015—2016 and provide services for non-long-term suspended students. The District will explore the use of LSASP in partnership with the MTSS model. Students who are not successful through Tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions at the school site may be suggested to Academic Directors by the site MTSS team as possible candidates to determine if LSASP will be provided to them as an alternative.

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 follow the state-mandated instructional minutes schedule per subject area. The schedule defines 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.
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 3rd grade is four times less likely to graduate by age 19 than a child who does read proficiently by that time. Fiester, L. (2010.). In order to ensure that all 3rd grade students are reading at grade level, the district will be focusing much of its literacy efforts on early grades. The District will conduct trainings on reading support programs, such as, "Daily Five," "Leveled Readers," and "Close Reading." The trainings provide the knowledge and skills necessary to implement effective reading strategies/practices. 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.
3. **Preschools.** The District will continue to offer high-quality preschool programs in select 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.

4. **Imagine Learning English for ELL Students.** Imagine Learning (IL) is an innovative digital learning software program that creates an interactive, personalized learning path for children as they master critical skills for reading and speaking. IL is research-based and presented in a highly interactive, motivating, yet rigorous format. (Baumann, 1984). IL differentiates and personalizes instruction for ELL students, struggling readers, and students with special needs. IL provides instruction, practice, and assessment that are designed to teach Arizona College and Career Readiness standards which will prepare students to quickly become English language proficient. IL provides an initial placement test to assess each student at the beginning of the school year. This enables teachers to individualize their instruction to meet individual student needs. IL provides an academic language emphasis within a personalized learning framework to ensure that ELL students become proficient in subject matter and increase critical thinking to improve test scores. Finally, IL centralizes and systematizes student performance data at the district level. Data will be made available to teachers and principals, plus district-level aggregated data to inform decision-making. These reports will ensure that the Language Acquisition Department will be able to see in detail how the implementation is going.

B. Family Engagement

The District values the family as the first and most important teacher and partner in the education of students.

The District is using the Multi Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) model to implement different types of family engagement. In order to remain consistent, the District will follow a tiered model for family engagement and support.

Type 1 family engagement involves general outreach to all families, with a focus on African American and Latino students and families, occurring mostly at school sites and family centers at times that are accessible to families. Type 1 family engagement includes activities such as: parent training, quarterly informational events, parent education and resource opportunities; and using multiple media to connect with families.

Type 2 family engagement involves specific outreach to the families of African American or Latino students who are struggling, disengaged, and/or at-risk of dropping out. Type 2 family engagement includes specific activities related to the needs of the identified students as documented on the District's Student Equity and Intervention Request for Service form.

Family Engagement – Type 1

1. All schools will provide training 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

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home to support student achievement in reading and/or mathematics using a model such as Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT).

- a. Training for implementation of this model will be required – Proposed Training would be Train the Trainer Model.
 - b. All schools in concert and coordination with Student Support and Partnership Centers will provide information regarding parent education and resource opportunities.
2. Quarterly events will be held throughout the community. These sessions will inform parents of the programs and opportunities available for African American and Latino students.
 3. Accessibility - In order to maximize parent participation, the sessions will take place at various times and may be connected to student related or community events within a positive supportive environment, particularly for families of African American or Latino students.
 4. Scheduling - Event dates will be coordinated through the District Family Engagement Director and/or Family Engagement Coordinator.
 5. Multiple media - Develop and use social media structures to connect with students and families in contemporary fashion. This may include Facebook, text messaging, mobile/smartphone applications (i.e. TUSD's Parent Link), media-based parent training and events. Family engagement opportunities and outreach may include:
 - webinar sessions for parent trainings linked to school websites
 - math websites for parents such as Khan Academy
 - strategies for parent student interactions in newsletters
 - inspirational texts or quotes for families to discuss
 - parent access to TUSDStats
 - administrative newsletter and website communications for parents and students

Family Engagement – Type 2

The District's African-American and Mexican American Student Services Departments, in conjunction with site administrators, Family Engagement Staff, and Title I staff, are primarily responsible for coordinating targeted parent outreach for African American or Latino students identified as struggling, disengaged, and/or at-risk of dropping out.

1. Families of students identified as struggling, disengaged, and/or at-risk of dropping out will receive outreach from District staff most closely aligned to students' identified demographic or academic need as possible.
 - a. Site staff including Title I family engagement, teachers, and other school staff will perform targeted outreach to families with students identified as struggling, disengaged, and/or at-risk of dropping out.
 - b. Site staff will use the District's Student Equity and Intervention Request for Service referral form provides another opportunity to coordinate and communicate specific outreach needs (form available to site staff at <http://intranet/interventionform.asp>).

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To ensure more comprehensive support, the District will add Language Acquisition and Exceptional Education to the list of departments from whom service requests may be submitted.

2. Outreach to families of students identified as struggling, disengaged, and/or at-risk of dropping out will be conducted to encourage attendance and engagement at site and district quarterly events, and may include direct mailing(s), home visits, and/or phone calls to targeted families. This outreach will be coordinated between school and district resource staff including Title I family engagement & district support staff. These communications will meet the District's language accessible standards for families.

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. (Dynarski, M., et al, 2008)

Families of students with disabilities will be supported through Types 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.

The District Communication Department 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.
- 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.
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 professional development for Imagine Learning English. The purpose of the trainings is to enable ELD teachers and principals to understand the format and use of Imagine Learning English within the classroom. It will also ensure that teachers and students understand the format and use of Imagine Learning as an ELD intervention tool within the classroom. Teachers will also learn how to accurately group ELD students and data collection.
8. The District will provide quarterly professional development opportunities for support staff in academic support for reading, writing, and math.

V. CONSULTATION WITH NATIONAL EXPERTS

The District has conducted extensive research on dropout prevention strategies, methods, and practices. Furthermore, National Dropout expert, Dr. Russ Rumberger reviewed and made recommendations regarding the District Dropout Prevention and Graduation Plan. Dr. Russ Rumberger states, “I support final version.” 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
 - a. Dr. Bob Peterkin
 - b. Dr. Louie Rodriguez
 - c. Dr. Pedro Noguera
 - d. Dr. Jerry Weast
 - e. Dr. Rose Owens West

VI. NATIONAL RESEARCH

1. Allensworth and Easton, 2007, What Matters for Staying On-Track and Graduating in Chicago Public Schools
2. English Baumann, J. F. (1984). The effectiveness of an instruction paradigm for teaching main idea comprehension.
3. Dynarski, M., et al. "Dropout prevention: A practice guide (NCEE 2008–4025). Washington, DC: US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences." *National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practice_guides/dp_pg_090308.pdf* (2008).
4. Fiester, L. (2010). Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. KIDS COUNT Special Report. Annie E. Casey Foundation.
5. Heppen & Therriault, 2008, **Developing Early Warning Systems to Identify Potential High School Dropouts, betterhighschools.org**
6. Kennelly & Monrad, 2007, **Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs With Appropriate Interventions, betterhighschools.org**
7. Proven Strategies from the OSEP Positive Behavior Support and Interventions website: www.pbis.org. 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).
8. Research and information from National Dropout Prevention Center / Network
9. Institute of Education Sciences What Works Clearinghouse, Dropout Prevention, Practice Guide, August 2008
10. Early Warning System Implementation Guide by Susan Bowles Therriault, Jessica Heppen, Mindee O’Cummings, Lindsay Fryer, and Amy Johnson
11. www.teachsafeschools.org/alternativestosuspension
12. http://www.indiana.edu/~atlantic/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Disparity_Policy_031214.pdf
13. <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/index.html>

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December 9, 2014

To: Samuel E. Brown, Director of Desegregation
Tucson Unified School District

From: Russell W. Rumberger, Professor of Education, University of California, Santa Barbara

Re: TUSD, Final Dropout Prevention and Graduation Plan

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a final report regarding my advice, input, and final opinion of the TUSD, Final Dropout Prevention and Graduation Plan.

Scope of Review

December 9-11, 2014. Reviewed TUSD, Final Dropout Prevention and Graduation Plan, Dated December 1, 2014.

[Please include the dates of review, items reviewed, general advice or input provided, specific advice or input provided on major items or major issues.]

Required Feedback Areas

- A. Suggestions for ways to best enhance graduation rates.

Based on recommendations of IES *Dropout Prevention* practice guide, there are targeted strategies that focus on at risk students and school-wide strategies that focus on improving the school as a whole, particularly personalizing the learning environment and improving the relevance and rigor of the instruction. The guide provides a good framework for identifying and organization dropout prevention strategies at the middle and high school levels.

Research also finds that preschool and elementary school strategies are also effective in improving graduation rates. See Belfield and Levin (2007).

- B. Recommendations for improvement of the plan.

It would be useful to provide some baseline data on graduation rates, dropout rates, course failures, attendance rates, suspensions rates by grade level and by subgroups, perhaps in an appendix.

Plan is very comprehensive, but that raises the question of whether it is feasible to carry out every feature of the plan. Does the district have the funds and knowledge to carry out all the features of the plan? For instance, creating small learning communities is a time consuming and costly intervention just by itself. Hiring more social workers is also costly. These two interventions, just themselves, are costly. Implementing the entire plan with such a broad array

of activities and interventions seems unfeasible. If that may be the case, it would be useful to prioritize which ones are the most important and feasible, and therefore will be carried out first.

Also, it would be useful to distinguish between interventions that may directly improve dropout rates and their proximal predictors, such as attendance, grades (course failures), and behavior versus those that may simply improve overall student engagement and progress in school. For example, parent meetings in middle school (p. 16) are unlikely to reduce dropout rates or even achievement, but they may help students make more informed choices about course selection and college preparation

Review of Final Draft

I support final version overall. It is valuable to consider interventions at each level of schooling—elementary, middle, and high school. It will take such a comprehensive approach to fully address the dropout problem. However, the plan is also grandiose and hence unfeasible. It seems unlikely the district has the money and talent to carry out all of the interventions. Thus, my main recommendation is that the report comment on the cost and feasibility (will and capacity) of carrying out all of these interventions, and then prioritize among these.

For example, I would start with some high school interventions, with a focus on ninth grade, such as reducing course failures and improving attendance. See Roderick, et al. (2014). I would then move on to middle school. See Allensworth, et al. (2014). Then I would consider preschool and elementary school programs. See Belfield and Levin (2007).

The report doesn't mention dropout recovery efforts, but it would be good to at least mention whether any attention will be given to re-engaging dropouts. See Hollands, et al. (2014) and new GradNation report (2014).

The report needs to provide evidence that the particular programs described have been shown to be effective. If such evidence does not exist, the report should describe why the district believes the particular program will be effective in achieving its stated goal.

I support the idea of piloting some programs to see how well they work. In this case, it is important to describe how the programs will be evaluated, such as whether the district will hire an outside evaluator to carry it out. In fact, all of the interventions should be evaluated.

Additional References:

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Belfield, C., & Levin, H. M. (2007). *The price we pay: Economic and social consequences of inadequate education*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

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Hollands, F., et al. (2014). Cost-effectiveness analysis in practice: Interventions to improve high school completion. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(18), 307-326.

Roderick, M., Kelly-Kemple, T., Johnson, D. W., & Beechum, N. O. (2014). *Preventable failure: Improvements in long-term outcomes when high schools focused on the ninth grade*. Chicago: Consortium on Chicago School Research, University of Chicago. Retrieved from: <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/preventable-failure-improvements-long-term-outcomes-when-high-schools-focused-ninth>