

The Working Group Report on Special Education in SMMUSD

Presented on April 23, 2009



Working Group

- Introductions
- Presenters
 - JoDee Moen, SAMOHI Resource Teacher and Department Chair
 - Theresa Harris, Parent of Preschooler, Lincoln Child Development Center
- Superintendent Cuneo convened the 18 member Working Group last Fall.
- The Group consisted of parents, staff and community members who applied for a spot and was Facilitated by the Claros Group.
- The Working Group was asked to make recommendations to the Superintendent regarding Special Education in the District.

Working Group

(Continued)

- The Report is not meant to replace the previous reports on Special Education.
- The 2004 Strategic Plan and the Barber Report should continue to be used as resources as we move into the Implementation Phases.

Working Group

(Continued)

- The Group will reconvene at the request of the Superintendent, to assess progress in the Recommendations.
- Certain Group members may also assist in the Implementation Phases.

Overview of Process

- Ten facilitated Group meetings, each averaging 4 hours in length were held between November 2008 and March 2009.
- Subgroups met separately to draft, refine, and finalize Recommendations.
- Input was solicited from the public at a Town Hall Meeting.

Goals & Recommendations

- The Seven Focus Areas with specific Recommendations and Milestones are:
 1. Inclusion/Integration
 2. Recruitment, Retention and Training of staff
 3. The IEP Process
 4. Equitable Access for All
 5. Communication Systems and the Websites
 6. Early Identification, Assessment and Interventions
 7. Programs

Goal 1: Create a Culture of Inclusion and Integration

Recommendations:

1. Revise the District's current **Policy** of Inclusion and Integration and take steps to ensure its success
2. Hire an **Integration Director** who would be responsible for things such as:
 - a) Managing the Inclusion Specialists across all school sites
 - b) Establishing collaborative classrooms at each school site
 - c) Establishing or expanding programs such as the "buddy" program at each school site
 - d) Implementing programs and trainings geared toward ability awareness
 - e) Bridging the gap between Special Education and General Education
3. **Evaluate Principals** on their success in embracing, upholding and promoting the integration of all children at school sites in job performance evaluations

Goal 2: Recruit, Retain and Train Excellent Special Education Staff

Recommendations:

1. Expedite the **hiring** process
2. Strengthen **recruitment** efforts
3. Conduct **compensation** surveys
4. Maximize **internships** & volunteer opportunities
5. **Reconcile** Personnel Commission, Human Resources & Special Education for current openings

Goal 2: Recruit, Retain and Train Excellent Special Education Staff

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6. Develop and conduct **Blind Surveys** and Exit Interviews
7. Distribute district Special Education **Handbook**
8. **Staff Development** for both Special Ed and General Ed Staff
9. **Cross-training** for both Special and General Education Staff
10. Create a Healthy and Positive **Work Environment**
11. **Mentor Program** for new Special Education staff

Goal 3: Improve The IEP Process

Recommendations:

1. Create an **IEP Parent Packet**
2. Conduct annual **IEP training** for both Special and General Ed staff
3. Require that staff running IEP have **direct contact** with the student
4. Require a **district-wide log** for all service providers that is maintained and made available to parents.
5. Hire a Professional **Special Needs Liaison**
6. Create a **Civility Policy** for parents and staff and create an environment that supports (rather than retaliates against) staff who seek to obtain services/accommodation for special education students.
7. Continue collaboration with groups such as the PTA, SEDAC and Malibu Special Ed Foundation to offer **Forums and Speaker Series** on IEP and related subjects.
8. Develop consistent district-wide practices surrounding **Transitional IEP's** and ensure monitoring
9. Incorporate the student services contained in any **Settlement Agreement** into the student's IEP

Goal 4: Ensure Equitable Access

Recommendations:

1. Ensure that all Special Education materials are available in **Spanish**
2. Ensure that **Translators and Bilingual Community Liaisons** assist Special Education parents in the IEP Process
3. **Align goals** and coordinate efforts with Task Force on the Achievement of Students of Color and Communications Task Force
4. Offer culturally responsive **Parent Education Workshops/Training** focused on Special Education
5. Recruit to increase **diversity** in the Parent Resource Network, SEDAC and similar groups

Goal 5: Improve Communication Systems and the Websites

Recommendations:

1. Evaluate the new **Email System** and add necessary features that address the needs of the Special Education population.
2. Ensure new **Student Information System** contains features that address the needs of the Special Education population
3. Redesign the SMMUSD **Websites** to reflect values of Transparency, Information and Inclusion
4. Form a **Communications Task Force** to assist with Phase I of the new Communications Systems.
5. Follow through with the hiring of a **Communications Specialist** who would be responsible for all Communications Systems and Public Communications

Goal 6: Strengthen the Process of Early Identification, Assessment, & Intervention

Recommendations:

1. Establish a formal **Policy** of pro-active early identification
2. Fully develop a district-wide **Response to Intervention (RTI)** program
3. Develop a consistent **Student Success Team (SST)**
4. Publicize an **Intervention contact list** of Staff Members and their roles and publicize the **resources** available to parents

Goal 7: Continuously Improve Program/Instruction

Recommendation: Convene a Special Education Programs Task Force with Charges that Would Include:

1. Inventory and Analyze all district Programs
 - a) Range of services across eligibilities and grades
 - b) Evaluate Programs for Strengths and Weaknesses, Cost Effectiveness
2. Develop Program development processes and procedures
3. Invest in cost-effective Programs

Questions