

Special Education District Advisory Committee
Board of Education Annual Mid-Year Written Report
2010-2011

Chair: Dr. Claudia Landis
Vice Chair: Chris Chandler

Board Liaisons: Ben Allen and Kelly Pye

Staff Liaison: Dr. Sara Woolverton

CHARGES:

1. Advise the Board of Education about attitudes, opinions, and issues significant to the Special Education community.
2. Continue to work with District staff in the identification of relevant and unrealized goals included in the recommendations of the Working Group (2009), the Lou Barber Report (2008), and the Special Education Strategic Plan (2004).
3. Through the Special Education Parent Handbook Ad Hoc Committee, produce revisions to the Special Education Parent Handbook in collaboration with District staff based on changes in relevant law, District updates and feedback from community members.
4. Review and assess the instructional technology in the District's Special Education Classes and report on how our District compares to districts that prioritize technology and utilize technology based curriculum and whether additional/updated equipment and/or software is needed to enable students to become computer literate and allow students and teachers meaningful access to current technology-based curricula.
5. Continue the Financial Ad Hoc Committee's work with the Director of Special Education, the District's Chief Financial Officer and the Financial Oversight Committee in developing recommendations.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE:

Presentations and School Site Visits

A primary goal of our committee in the 2010-2011 school year is to improve our knowledge base in order to better advise the Board of Education on special education. To do so, we have used our meetings as a vehicle to feature relevant presentations on subjects that pertain to local and national developments.

We devoted the September and October 2010 SEDAC meetings to introducing new members and staff, along with start-of-the-year business. Beginning in November 2010, we featured presentations at each SEDAC meeting:

Nov. 9, 2010 – Site visit to McKinley Elementary School and presentation by members of the McKinley Special Education department

Dec. 7, 2010 – Presentation by Tri-City (Beverly Hills, Culver City and Santa Monica) SELPA Interim Director, Dr. Jeanne Davis. Dr. Davis explained the workings of our SELPA. In addition, she discussed the need for full state funding of the Department Mental Health (DMH) services for disabled students, and more specifically, state measure AB3632. As a consequence of the attendance to this meeting by Board liaisons Ben Allen and Kelly Pye, the Board issued a formal resolution to the Governor and State Legislature at its Dec. 13, 2010 meeting (Board Agenda 12/13/10, Recommendation A.03, Resolution No. 10 – 17).

Jan. 4, 2011 – Presentation on Star Testing and IEP Documentation by Director of Educational Services, Maureen Bradford, and District Special Education Coordinator, Darcy Keleher. They presented the various state tests and an overview of testing choices such as CST, CMA, and CAPA. This included the very important topic of the range of accepted variations and accommodations that allow the tests to count at the state level. Ms. Bradford discussed which tests would be appropriate for which students – including those specific to students with disabilities – and the implication of such choices for IEP meetings. Ms. Keleher presented a newly-created informational document that in detail outlines the rules and regulations regarding STAR and CAHSEE testing, that will, for the first time this school year, be distributed to special education Teachers of Record (TOR). This document is intended to aid teachers of record in crafting appropriately detailed IEP documents with special education families. SEDAC expressed a concern that this document should additionally be shared with parents.

Feb. 1, 2011 – Presentation by SAMOHI “M” House Principal Larry Boone on achievement of African-American students at SAMOHI. Our intent as a committee is to better understand the challenges facing our students of color, who like special education students represent a numerically significant subgroup in STAR testing and as such require special analysis.

SEDAC plans additional site visits to John Adams Middle School and Malibu this year as well as more presentations.

Ad Hoc Committees

Much of SEDAC’s work this school year has been accomplished through Ad Hoc committees. The current Ad Hoc committees and their mid-year progress are as follows:

Financial Ad Hoc Committee — The Financial Ad Hoc Committee has worked closely with Chief Financial Officer, Janice Maez, and a subcommittee of the Financial Oversight Committee (FOC) to develop a workable reporting instrument on information that is specific to Special Education that parallels the budgetary reporting structure required by Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). This parallel Special Education reporting structure took two years of regular meetings to develop. We rolled it out starting with the Unaudited Actuals that closed out the 2009-2010 school year, providing for the first time detailed information on the closing out of a year. In addition, the CFO has started to generate Interim Reports that parallel the District's interim reporting LACOE schedule, providing for the first time the same detailed information for a current year. This will provide useful, timely and detailed information on Special Education expenditures that heretofore has not been available. As a consequence of this, the Board will have the opportunity to analyze Special Education expenditures as its budgeting process occurs and not after the fact. The CFO plans on presenting a parallel Second Interim Report at the March FOC meeting.

Transition Ad Hoc Committee — The Transition Ad Hoc Committee has spent the past several months investigating the transition policies and handbooks of comparable school districts in the area and is in the beginning stages of compiling an Education Transition Program Handbook specific to SMMUSD.

Charter School Ad Hoc Committee — A Charter School Ad Hoc Committee researched and investigated whether the proposed Pt. Dume Elementary Charter School petition properly addressed special education needs. After thoroughly reading the petition and traveling to Malibu to meet with the applicants in an attempt to gather as much accurate information as possible, the Ad Hoc committee presented their findings to the Board at the December 2, 2010 meeting. The committee supported the petition specific to the Charter's ability to provide special education services to students with disabilities (See Attachment 1).

Legislative Ad Hoc Committee — After the December SEDAC presentation by Interim SELPA Director Jeanne Davis on the veto by the Governor of funding to provide county mental health services to students with disabilities through DMH & AB 3632, SEDAC assembled an Ad Hoc committee. This Ad Hoc committee will keep members informed of state and county level developments and the need for any action that should be taken on behalf of disabled students such as letter writing and lobbying.

HIGHLIGHTS TO DATE OF PARTICULAR NOTE:

As a response to the Board of Education's previous year's decision to cut two nursing positions in the district, SEDAC membership voted to craft and release a statement supporting the reinstatement of the nurses as the Board deliberated on newly available monies at its December 9, 2010 meeting. After much discussion, the

Board voted to reinstate the positions through the end of the school year and to create a Health Services Task Force. Members of SEDAC have been invited to participate on the Task Force, the first meeting of which is February 10 (See Attachment 2).

SEDAC members comprised three of four remaining parent members on the Superintendent's Special Education Program Task Force, a direct outcome of the March, 2009 Working Group Report, Goal #7 (two other parent members previously resigned or stopped attending). Sadly, these three members each resigned in rapid succession in mid-January, each doing so individually. Each cited disappointment to the lack of coherent and meaningful research and investigation by the Task Force of "a comprehensive range of research-based program" (Goal #7, Working Group). This lack of research calls into question the ability of the Task Force to make meaningful programmatic and instruction recommendations in the near term.

Several members participated in the ½ hour timeslot offered to SEDAC by Leadership Associates Executive Search Advisors to provide input into the superintendent search. Members participated with enthusiasm and were pleased with the opportunity.

As a mechanism to serve SEDAC members with young children, we experimented with the provision of childcare during our meetings. Staff liaison Sara Woolverton kindly arranged for and paid for the service. We had moderate success with its utilization. District liability rules make continuity of the provision of this service difficult — we can only offer childcare when our DAC meetings are at a school site. Childcare cannot be offered at District offices. We need to figure out how to deal with this, because reliably supporting the childcare needs of members with young children we believe is important to the renewal of SEDAC as a committee.

SUGGESTED DIRECTION FOR 2010 – 2011:

With regard to Charge #1 we will continue with SEDAC presentations, site visits and position statements.

With regard to Charge #2 and realization of the recommendations of the 2004 Special Education Strategic Plan, the 2008 Independent Evaluation, and the 2009 Superintendent's Working Group Report, it is SEDAC's recommendation that the district reevaluate the delivery of instructional programs and interventions that effectively address the core deficits of students with disabilities. It is our longstanding position supported by the above-mentioned reports that this cannot be accomplished by primarily adapting general education curricular instructional materials, as is current practice.

With regard to Charge #3 and updates to the Parent Handbook we are looking at revisions that address IEP meeting procedures.

With regard to Charge #4 and instructional technology, members who previously constituted this effort plan to meet and assess next steps.

With regard to Charge #5 and the Financial Ad Hoc Committee we look forward to an ultimate goal of tying expenditures to the delivery of program.

BUDGETARY IMPLICATIONS:

Through a combination of program research and financial reporting, SEDAC hopes to fulfill its role in advising the Board on how to think in new ways about the district's programmatic needs and how to solve them in a cost effective manner.

Attachment 1

December 2, 2010

To: Members of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education

From: The Special Education District Advisory Committee Ad Hoc Committee to Review the Special Education component of the Pt. Dume Marine Science Charter Petition

As members of the Special Education District Advisory Committee Ad Hoc Committee to review the Special Education component of the Pt. Dume Marine Science Charter Petition, we read the petition with attention to the description of the plan for the delivery of educational services to students with disabilities.

The Ad Hoc committee members also met with stakeholders from the Malibu Community; including the petitioning parents, community members, and a local elected official. Based on our review of the documents, interviews with the petitioners, and interviews with independent experts, we see no reason to believe that the level or quality of Special Education services delivered by SMMUSD would decline should the school become a charter school.

The petitioners agreed with a SEDAC recommendation that a representative of the Pt. Dume Special Education community attend monthly SEDAC meetings as well as the meetings of the Tri-City SELPA Community Advisory Committee (CAC). We also discussed and agreed to the need for an electronic record keeping protocol to be developed to ensure the movement of Educational Records as students transition to other schools.

Respectfully,

Meredith Hight and Heather Zakson

Attachment 2

December 9, 2010

To: Members of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District Board of Education

From: Members of the Special Education District Advisory Committee

Members of the Special Education District Advisory Committee have voted to recommend that the Board reinstate the two nursing positions that were discontinued because of the recent budget crisis.

All students benefit from having an adequate nursing staff, especially students in special education and those who are medically fragile or have other medical issues. Every day, school nurses provide necessary services. Some of these services involve emergencies such as seizures and allergic reactions and others are routine such as caring for students with colds or cramps. As a matter of law, nurses must provide certain services, such as vision screening and the administering of insulin. In addition, Federal IDEA law requires that a nurse participate as a member of the IEP team where there are needs that necessitate assessment and implementation by a medical professional. This need exists where a student exhibits aberrant behavior and mental health decompensation. Registered nurses who are on the IEP team and who are familiar with the special needs of children with behavioral or mental health issues, are able to properly de-escalate crises. Office personnel are ill equipped to deal with these complex issues.

Having an adequate number of nurses on staff, protects the health and safety of our students and will be cost effective in the long run as it reduces the costs associated with 1) contracts with outside vendors to provide services that must be provided by nurses as a matter of law. 2) unnecessary calls to 911 made by panicked office workers, 3) legal liability for medical mistakes made by office staff; and 4) legal exposure associated with the improper handling of behavioral or mental health crises.

It is hard to imagine that our special needs students can be safely and compassionately included in our school community without retaining adequate nursing staff.

For these reasons we request that the Board please reinstate the two discontinued nursing positions and make the health and safety of our students a top priority.