

**Irvine Unified School District - SELPA Community Advisory Committee for Special Education**  
**General Meeting Minutes for Thursday, February 22, 2024, 9:30 a.m.**  
**Creekside Learning Center Room 1, 3387 Barranca Pkwy, Irvine.**

The meeting was called to order at 9:32 am by the committee chair. Quorum was met and confirmed via the sign in sheet.

CAC Officers present; Esther Morales, Chair, Heena Shah, Vice-Chair, Sandra Albers, Secretary, Angie Foster, Campus Rep Coordinator, Ilaria Superti, Family Engagement Coordinator and Advisor Melanie Hertig, SELPA Director. School Board Member McEwen, reported on the last school board meeting where students were recognized for their work and as Science Fair award winners. One 6th grade student designed glasses for the visually impaired, she installed a sensor that will detect things a certain distance away, and give a cue to let you know if you are approaching something. Attendees were reminded that the school board meetings are recorded for anyone who may want to see them.

Tammy Blakely, Executive Director of Student Support Services spoke about the LCAP (Local Control and Accountability Plan). The annual survey for IUSD and the LCAP are interactive processes that help IUSD identify annual goals, take action on those goals, and measure progress on academic achievement, school climate and parent engagement as part of the 10-month LCAP process.

The LCFF (Local Control Funding Formula) is the state funding formula for how money is spent for mostly gen ed students. The special education plan is different, and the two plans are not connected. Base funding is for every single student. Then for other populations that are unduplicated, they receive supplemental funding under 3 categories. If districts reach the threshold of 55% or higher of those students then they receive extra funding. However, Irvine doesn't meet the threshold of enough of those students, so IUSD is the lowest funded district in the county and in the state. So we have to be strategic with the money we receive.

The LCAP is a 3 year cycle document on distribution of funds. Some of the state priorities are; basic services, academic standards, parent involvement, student engagement, student outcomes, course access and the whole climate and broken down into three focus areas; conditions of learning, student outcome and student engagement. Action items fall into those three buckets and are reflected in the goals. Last year, there were 3 district goals and funding went to 55 action items. Parents, students, and staff are encouraged to participate and give their unique perspective in what is important to you. This information is considered in the LCAP goals and action items moving forward.

Goal 1 : Creating a positive school climate and systems of support for students, academic and personal success. Last year there were action items tied to summer school and activities. Mental health - project success, mental health specialists and BRCs. There was also something called optimistic advantage for calming kids in elementary school (during the pandemic). We have not expanded funds this year. There was also graduation support -since the graduation requirements were increased. Last year, \$11 million dollars was spent in Goal 1.

Goal 2 - Ensure all students have achievement in the state standards through access to rigorous and relevant learning tools, resources and skills for the students and staff. Since teachers play an important role, one call to action item is professional learning communities (PLCs). This is how teachers can be trained to not only differentiate and prepare students, students that need extra help. Then comes curriculum and TOSA (Teacher on Special Assignment) stipends and mentors, curriculum development, technology, physical education support. At the secondary level, teachers get some specialist support to ensure curriculum is consistent across its life - this all costs about \$9 million dollars.

Goal 3- This includes an action item for General Education Certificated staffing, and a second action item that is Special Education Certificated staff. The intervention sections - the allocations are to the school sites so they can best determine where interventions will go. A question was asked - what is the breakdown for each? Answer: "it is \$160 million for general education staff and \$30 million dollars for special education staff." Induction fees would help to hire and retain quality staff, innovative furniture, and the CT ROP sections. Total spent on Goal 3 is \$10 million dollars.

Thought Exchange (Tejoin.com) - is a confidential process for all to share their input and thoughts. In your confidential answers, you will answer a few questions, what programs your student is in. Once you share your thoughts, you are able to see other feedback and rank whether we agree or not. This survey is going to be open until March 29th at 5pm - you can go in multiple times.

Question - if parents are not familiar with what LCAP is, is there a document to share?

Answer: 2-min video <https://iusd.org/article/we-want-your-feedback-district-investments-and-priorities>

Motion to adopt agenda for the 2/22/24 CAC General Meeting. First: Heena Shah. Second: Sandra Albers. Motion passed. The November 16, 2023 meeting minutes were approved as presented. First: Heena Shah. Second: Renee Carleson. Motion passed.

Esther stated that on January 26, 2024 the office of Special Education/SELPA Director sent a memo to all CAC members regarding the California Public Records Act. IUSD Staff are here to answer any questions about this. Since November 16th, 2023 there were 185 CAC members. However, 2 asked to be removed, 2 moved and 4 had returned emails, so a total of 8 members were removed. Then four new members signed up, so now there are 181 members.

Although, the public comments are reserved for the public to comment, the interruption of questions were given a response:

Question 1. Were all those 181 members approved by the IUSD school board?

Melanie Hertig responded that the district is in the process of revising the way that CAC membership and voting is done.

Question 2. Is the District trying to get the bylaws to reflect the Ed Code?

Esther explained that they are in the process of also reviewing the bylaws, but for now they are not rejecting anyone who wants to be a CAC member.

Question 3. When are the by-laws committee meetings happening?

Esther responded that the committee will be meeting soon.

There were 3 agendized and 3 non-agendized public comments;

PC1; California Public Records Act, agenda item. Mrs. Kamm spoke about the CAC, and how it is a local agency and a government entity. In the past it has gotten confused and thought of as a support group, or being run like the PTA. She thinks that is what caused a lot of miscommunications over the years. She said that for members these meetings should be video recorded. If the goal, per the Ed Code, is to increase membership, these videos need to be available on the website. Esther stated that these meetings have not been recorded but that isn't true. All of the zoom meetings over COVID were recorded. Even the September 2022 meeting was videotaped and on the website, and she made a copy of it. It does a disservice to parents if they want to connect. Regarding the Public Records request, people need to understand, and Melanie didn't really present it, they are done only for items relating to the business.

She stated that officers or representatives are supposed to give all communications regarding things like CAC meetings, CAC by-laws, the CAC election, even if it's on their personal device, personal email and texts. Now, the superintendent has told me that the officers and representatives are not abiding by the law and that's actually impeding an investigation. So I think that obviously, some people were taken aback, they didn't understand this. But I don't think that that's an excuse to violate the law. So I would like all of the officers and representatives to actually abide by the law. And I think perhaps in their bylaws, we need to have something that says, if you're an officer or representative, and you're willing to violate the law then you are automatically eliminated from that position. So I would like to request that everybody do that and all of the representatives and CAC members do follow the law. And in regards to that, I do believe that as a local agency, I do believe that the coffees that are only for current parents, I believe that that's a violation. Also, those meetings are also supposed to be open to the public, have an agenda, have an open public comment period, and be able to be videotaped.

PC2: Esther Morales spoke about the CAC. For several years now the CAC has been working to build community. When I moved here, other parents were welcoming. The coffee meet-ups are a safe space for all parents to meet other parents. There are parent education presentations every month on topics running from the IEP process, to public benefits and even school safety, which have been well-attended by parents who want the information. Parent education presentations video and/or slides are recorded and available on the district website.

PC3: Debbi Kamm asked a question about the LCAP. She stated that at the end of the last school board meeting she heard the HR Director talk about the need for mental health counselors, and the difficulty the district has been having finding mental health counselors, and finding licensed professionals. He said something concerning which was in order to fill the needs, they have gotten creative and made some kind of arrangement with classified employees. So not even credentialed employees, classified employees are doing the work of licensed professionals. For mental health issues, there are specific licenses, for example you are a licensed psychologist, licensed social worker, that kind of thing. I don't understand how we're having a classified employee take over a licensed physician. That is my question, not sure who can get back to me. Asked Melanie who she should direct it to. Melanie said to put it in writing and send it to her.

PC4: Pooja Lakhia with I-9 Sports spoke about the program, a youth sports organization that serves Tustin and Irvine. The focus is to give kids between ages 3-14 the opportunity to play sports, and to promote health and wellness. It is a fun, safe and recreational based program. We have practice plans put together by the United States Olympic Committee. And soon we will have camps and clinics powered by Nike. So our sports programs are all inclusive, we want to open the doors for everyone -general education and special education kids. Today, without a lot of marketing, we have two dozen kids on the spectrum with different needs that will come and play. And I cannot tell you how happy we are to open up our doors. We believe that sports are such an integral part of your childhood that every child deserves the chance to play. So I'm looking to get support from parents in the district, anyone to see how we can bring our sports programs, either in the form of after school programs where we bring our staff and equipment. We want to show that we have the support, and we want to educate the community that there's nothing wrong with kids with special needs. We just work with them differently. A little more patience, a little more loving care. And that's what we stand for, making it convenient for busy working families. So we're just asking for the opportunity, if you can help spread the word amongst friends, families. Again, we only serve kids between 3 and 14. So let me know if I can be of help. We're really excited to be part of the Irvine community and serve the school district here. Thank you for your time.

PC5: Debbi Kamm spoke about the purpose and the goal of the CAC getting sidetracked. At every single meeting I hear issues even from the officers, and that information seems to go to the SELPA director but I haven't heard how these issues are being resolved. According to the Ed Code, we have power and we are supposed to create annual priorities. Those annual priorities actually go to the board, they do not go to the SELPA director. One priority should be that we stop using attorneys against us. In December, a 9th circuit court sided with a parent who had been in litigation with Irvine Unified School District (which was initiated by the district) for six years. The parent actually spoke a month ago

at a board meeting, and the court case is estimated to cost the taxpayers about a million dollars. The issue in that case was modified curriculum, and during the September 2022 CAC meeting, several members and CAC parents brought up that their child had been put on modified curriculum, and that they were not told that meant the child was pulled off a high school diploma track. This six-year court case went all the way up to the 9th circuit court on that issue. So we are going to have more lawsuits like this because the staff is not adequately explaining to parents, that modified curriculum means that the student is not meeting state standards, and therefore this student cannot get a high school diploma. Our annual priorities need to be that the special education department adequately represents the law and represents the services and makes sure that parents know things like if their child is on diploma track or not. And I think another annual priority is that we need to stop spending so much money, a million dollars a year on attorneys to fight us when we ask for services. So the CAC has a really important position and we have power when we work together and follow up and follow the law. I think that it's time that we start doing that. Thank you.

PC6: Sandra Albers spoke on her son's experience being fully included in a general education class. I would like to thank many people by name, but I'm just going to call out a few people that I just wanted to send some gratitude for their work. Recently, my son moved from a special education essential classroom to a general education classroom in our neighborhood school. I want to especially thank our program specialist Ms. Albay for helping us fulfill our vision of having our son be fully included in general education. I want to acknowledge his excellent special education teacher Ms. Le at Loma Ridge, who worked closely with the general education teacher to modify his work, especially in social studies and science. This made it possible for me to access the curriculum at his level. In his current setting, I already see the benefit of having him there. He is having daily opportunities to interact with peers, and is happy to attend school. And he's actually able to tell me at times what he's learning and I see this in his communication log too, but for him to spontaneously say those things is great to hear. I'm thankful for the communication and transparency from our new program specialist. He has been welcomed by his new general education teacher and other students, some of which he already knew from before. I'm here to support the district and all of his teachers and staff to continue to meaningfully include him, as well as other students with disabilities in general education settings. Lastly, given that instructional aides play such a critical role in setting the successful experience for our kids, I wanted to just share this book. I know some of our school sites already have it, but I really like it. Because from a parent's perspective, it is easy to read. It's called *The Paraprofessional's Handbook for Effective Support in Inclusive Classrooms*. It has individual chapters on providing social, academic, and behavioral supports, and talks about facilitating connections between students. So I think it would be awesome to provide our paraprofessionals with cliff notes or excerpts from this book. I think this training is especially important for when a student does not have a permanent one on one aide, and works with various aides.

SELPA Director Mrs. Hertig started off by introducing Special Education staff that were present. Anna Zeimann who is representing the secondary program specialist, Isabel Vu, the lead school psychologist, and Amber Murakami, our elementary program specialist. We have Taryn Dreifus, our admin support person and Elise Green who is our parent liaison and TOSA who wears many hats. Lisa Torkzadeh, our Elementary Director and Sean Viney representing our coordinator group. We also have Jennifer O'Malley our ADR Director, so thank you all for being here. I'm hitting a milestone, the end of this year will be my last here in the district. When your students were home last Friday, we were doing the district wide professional learning day. Our staff was providing training for both general education and special education teachers at the three school sites. And it was one of those proud moments when I saw all of our efforts. I got to see the dedication of this team, and that our work in Irvine is exceptional. I say that, because I'm biased about the group of people that I work with. We're finding that other districts, neighboring districts, and sometimes just colleagues I have in the state will reach out asking for guidance. How do you guys do this? Do you guys have a practice for this? And we do. There is integrity, passion for the work, the commitment to the kids, the advocacy for our children, and this department is exceptional. And so the things that we've worked on over the last 10 years, the programming, the regional programming, and a lot of this was influenced by our collaboration and partnership that we have with the CAC. It's another example of how far we've come in 10 years, working with our parent community as partners. It's our professional learning communities and within our professional learning communities, our staff are thinking about all of

our kids and our subgroups within Special Education. Our multilingual learners are our kids that are in other types of subgroups that represent special education. Our facilitated IEP work, and that's very intentional in working with parents. It was interesting to see the state of California put out a grant this year in the form of dispute resolution work across the state and the company that ended up receiving that grant is the same one we work with in Irvine so it's nice to say we already follow that model. And we're already doing those things.

The inclusion work and the co-teaching work that we have invested in towards this district is well respected by our general education staff. So Sandra, thank you so much for sharing, because we continue to work with everyone in the district, understanding the importance of inclusion. So when students were home on Friday, our special education staff did so many sessions for the professionals. Everybody in this room did sessions, and provided it to general education and special education. Those sessions included all of those things, plus more that I just spoke to. So we just continued to build capacity, and the district administrators were all there. We have collaborative relationships with Chapman, Cal State Fullerton, and Concordia universities that were our special ed lens that were there supporting us as well, because we have this this network in Orange County, and they're with us on this journey and want to support the work that they know what we're doing here. So I just want to thank the staff for all of those efforts. Many parents may not know that our team was really supporting a lot of the training that was happening last week.

The spring is the heaviest season for special education, as we are working with our day to day current issues and supporting teams and doing other training as well. We are planning for an extended school year and planning for the next school year as well. So this is our busiest season, the springtime. Regarding legislative updates, we've talked about the inclusion bill that Senator Ochoa Bogh had authored and didn't go through but she has committed again to pursue that bill specifically limiting the language to administrative credential language. So as administrators are receiving their administrative credential, there would be a strand on inclusion and understanding inclusion. So she hasn't given up and plans to narrow what that bill says to specifically that and see if she can't get that to go through. That's another bill but it doesn't have a number yet. There's another bill- Assembly Bill 2173, from Assemblywoman Addis, who is from the San Luis Obispo area. And that's actually looking at the language in which we describe our children with emotional differences. So we are hoping to see a change in the wording for the eligibility from emotional disturbance to emotional disability.

Next I will discuss a little bit about the local plan. Every three years, a district is required to resubmit their local plan. Three years ago, there were significant changes to the state template for the local plan. So every SELPA in the state has submitted a new local plan, and we're on that cycle again. And so what we'll be seeing in the next few days is like the feedback that we're required to have from our community or CAC community, so you'll be receiving an email that has each section of our local plan broken down, and you can reference what we already have currently, in the local plan. We received the template and when the local plan really began, historically, is when IDEA became law. Every state was required to provide those services that follow the law. In response, California developed the SELPA -a regionalized community of providers to follow the law. Our local plan happens to be a single district community. The state basically says, here's this area, tell us how you're following the law. That's really what the local plan is so when you receive that email, you'll be able to comment and ask questions. In regards to our current local plan, the revised local plan will be provided at our main CAC meeting and then it goes through if there's any other additional revisions, we will consider those and then it's presented to the school board at the end of June. The Orange County Department of Ed reviews it and then it gets submitted to the state.

Also, any parents that have been able to contribute to Irvine Public School Foundation, thank you. Our department was over the moon with some of our staff who had applied for the grants through IPSF, and were recipients of it. We have staff that had applied for maximizing access through innovative technology that was our VR vision itinerant group, and they received a very nice award for a specific project, and also creating equity and inclusion through core communication. That was our assistive technology, augmentative communication and TOSA group that received that one. And Lisa just shared with me that one of our teachers at Portola Springs Elementary, one of our ESN teachers also

just received one too. So we're very grateful that through the donations of parents and staff to IPSF, our department was a direct recipient of those grant awards. Our CAC chairs asked for us to talk about our mental health director, and what her role is, so she is Natalie Hamilton. She has been an assistant principal at Northwood and Creekside -she has been in the district for many years. When Tammy was doing the LCAP presentation, there was a specific line item for mental health supports. This is how it reminds the school district was able to do this work that I'm going to talk about right now. It's been a priority in Irvine, to support all of our students who may have mental health needs. And Irvine does a really great job with all of our students in this area investing dollars into this work. There are mental health specialists and elementary resource counselors at all of our school sites, and to answer the question earlier in regards to licensing, all of those staff are licensed mental, marriage and family therapists are licensed social workers. And the way education employment works, they fall under classified positions, they're licensed, but they fall into a classified position. It's not necessary for them to have a credential to do that work and hold that role in the school district in baseball, there's a lot of people in the district that fall under classified or under certificated. And that group or license falls under classified and are required to have a credential to do the work. They also provide general education behavior console support for all sites district wide including creation and support of safety plans for significant behavioral challenges. Support is received through TOSAs and short term placement of behavior interventionist, in collaboration with our department on professional learning. We also provide professional learning for school psychologists and work closely with their group to provide training to General Education staff as well.

There are well spaces at every secondary site, and district wide there is professional development for behavior and multi tiered systems of support social emotional learning, and site meetings with individuals at schools that are behavior coaches. So they're a very busy team, but we're thankful we have our own special education site of mental health support as well.

Lisa Torkzadeh spoke about after school programs. The CAC has asked us to share some information regarding after school programming and what that means for a child with an IEP and the sentiment that we share with everyone is that any child can access after school programs. It is part of the IEP process. However they are required to go through an ADA process. It's about access, something considering reasonable accommodations. There've been a lot of questions in regards to a child with an IEP receiving an aide, and really we work with third party agencies. ELOP (Extended Learning Opportunities Program) is also a program that's new to our district. They do have access there, they're able to access that program. There are requirements through that program for underserved requirements that students are eligible, but they are operated under a third party agency. So every school site for elementary has a different agency that is operated. For example, IPSF has current after school programs on campuses. Catalyst has also Catalyst Kids and Rainbow Rising. The overall messaging and what we've been doing a lot is working collaboratively with these agencies to ensure that as we're navigating the challenges your child may have accessing it. And we do have staff that we report, the administrators and directors and coordinators at the site to ensure that we give access to all that.

As Melanie mentioned, we're in the phases of planning ESY and we have our dates for elementary preschool and elementary. We are excited preschool is going to be on the ECLC campus, which last year was not and we recognize that it has a lot of natural accommodations, like shorter toilet seats, ways that our preschool students can access the campus. The preschool and elementary dates are June 12 to July 12. And then high school and IATP are going to be June 13 to July 13. Two sites that will be hosting our ESY program, Oak Creek and Cypress village. And then middle school we'll have South Lake middle school and for high school we'll have Irvine High School and then IATP will be at IATP locations. Please register in advance, as this helps us with planning or understanding how many staff members we need, how many teachers we need, and setting up classes. So as you read our communication, even with transportation, we're going to be sending it out via ParentSquare. We were sending out through the sped email. But some families were getting it filtered through spam. But now the communication we've been using ParentSquare has been more successful for parents. Lastly there was a transportation survey that went out and closed on Sunday. Assembly Bill 2933 requires the state to be really articulate about the transportation services offered by the district. Really, it's important to receive feedback and in regards to a couple of areas that we're looking at is priority for TK through six and low income

students, accessibility for students with disabilities and homeless youth and Free and Appropriate or free transportation for unduplicated people.

Heena Shah, spoke for Angie Lynn Foster, campus rep coordinator. There are 17 Campus reps throughout elementary, junior high and high school. Parents can gather and discuss a variety of topics. If you are interested in becoming a campus rep at your child's school, reach out to Angela so she can further explain.

Family Engagement coordinator Ilaria gave an update on the Coffee and Connections parent education presentation survey for the 2024/25 school year. The survey went out in January and closed on February 7th. 106 responses were received, for topics the IEP process, transitions, SMART goals and supporting the whole child were among the top selected by parents. It also became clear that parents preferred to separate the presentations from the General CAC meeting. As expected, the preferred times are both morning and evening, staff will start working on the details in the coming months. Motion to accept the results of the Special Education Parent Presentation Topics Survey for the 2024/2025 school year and for IUSD staff to contact presenters, reserve venue and schedule the Able Coffee Cart from IATP. First: Heena Shah. Second: Robin Cowan. Motion passed.

The next Coffee Connections is Alternatives to Conservatorship and Special Needs Trusts, March 13 at 9:30am. The next parent coffee meet-up is tomorrow at Corner Bakery from 9 to 11am. Attendees were reminded to review the School Safety presentation and provide feedback to Dr. Bayne.

Theresa Collins, Director of Irvine Children's Fund and Irvine Jr. Games shared how proceeds from the Irvine Jr Games are used. This year they received \$200K, which allows for scholarships to be given to families that need childcare. Approximately 95% of the recipients are single heads of household and funding provides for summer childcare and before and after child care at Rainbow Rising. Registration is open for Irvine Jr. Games -for all students from 4th -8th who attend IUSD schools. For more information about the Adaptive PE division, please go to <https://irvinechildrensfund.org/irvine-junior-games/>.

Everyone is invited to attend the Abilities Awareness Event on April 24th from 5pm to 7:30pm at Woodbridge High School. There will be different activities for all, food, prizes, music, student performances, a resource fair and much more. This year's guest speaker is Caley Versfelt with Tides of Kindness, she is an entrepreneur and advocate for individuals with Down Syndrome. Motion to accept the planned activities for the Abilities Awareness Event. First: Heena Shah. Second: Ilaria Superti. Motion passed.

Esther also shared the CAC newsletter and it was suggested to make the Coffee & Connections graphic easier to read. Attendees were reminded about TASK parent workshops on various topics, PTA membership discounts and the free City's Connect bus will start running on April 1st. Next meeting is scheduled for May 23rd at 6pm at IATP-MPR. Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:38am. First: Sandra Albers. Second: Heena Shah. Motion passed.

Sandra Albers, Secretary