

Irvine Unified School District - SELPA Community Advisory Committee for Special Education General Meeting Minutes for Thursday, November 16, 2023, 9:30 a.m. at Creekside Learning Center Room 1, 3387 Barranca Pkwy, Irvine.

Chair, Esther Morales called the meeting to order at 9:31am, quorum was met. She welcomed IATP Able Coffee Cart students, Ms. Zoe shared about the IATP program; to learn more about their programs please visit: <https://iatp.iusd.org/>

CAC Officers present; Esther Morales, Chair, Heena Shah, Vice-Chair, Sandra Albers, Secretary, Angie Foster, Campus Rep Coordinator, and Advisor Melanie Hertieg, SELPA Director.

Esther introduced Superintendent Walker who shared the CARE acronym C=Courage to do the work and stand up for what's right, A=Adaptability - constantly seeking new platforms, technology, staff training and ability to make necessary changes, R=Resilience to keep moving forward, despite hard days, E=Endurance - things take time, changes happen in small ways when he have endurance. He also acknowledged the work of the IATP students; flower bouquets, succulent designs, coffee cart, etc. Board member Paul Bokota introduced himself as a board member and Liaison to the CAC, and stated he was thankful to be in attendance. He shared that his child with a disability had an IEP, and that he is familiar with that process and can be a contact for parents to discuss any issues or concerns.

Motion to adopt agenda for 11/16/2023 CAC General Meeting. First: Ilaria Superti. Second: Sandra Albers. Motion passed. The September 21, 2023 meeting minutes were approved as presented. First: Heena Shah. Second: Andrea Matolo. Motion passed.

Motion to appoint Ilaria Superti as Family Engagement Coordinator for the 23/24 school year. First: Angie Foster. Second: Robin Cowan. Motion passed.

Motion to appoint Andrea Matolo as Bylaws Committee Chair. First: Heena Shah. Second: Robin Cowan. There was a discussion, motion passed.

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

PC1; By-laws, agenda item. Mrs. Kamm spoke about the CAC by-laws and stated she was glad to hear there will be a new by-laws committee. A pivotal issue with the CAC is that there is a mandate that parents and the community who are looking at the Local Plan should give input and advice to the board. It's important that the CAC come up with annual priorities, and it's in the ed code that doing so is one of its main duties. This should be reinstated in the by-laws. She stated that there are many good CAC by-law templates to follow, and one thing that they have is a finite number of voting members to help manage things.

PC2; Structured Literacy Program, agenda item. Sandra spoke about her son who has dyslexia and his instructional needs. According to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) "structured literacy teaching is the most effective approach for students who experience unusual difficulty learning to read and spell printed words." She stated that Dr. Louisa Moats, among many other leaders in the Science of Reading, recommends a daily amount of 45 minutes of explicit instruction in foundational skills. She is grateful that

her son currently receives instruction in structured literacy but the program is not accredited by the IDA and only requires one-hour online training for teachers. The program does not have lessons with the recommended 45 minute duration, and is not intensive enough for her son's needs. Mrs. Albers stated that California is in the process of implementing new legislation in support of dyslexia screening and training for teachers but her son needs intervention now. Her follow up questions for the District were:

- What professional learning do teachers in our district receive on structured literacy, the essential components of reading instruction, the science of reading and dyslexia? As a parent, how can I stay informed on the dyslexia training completed by my child's teacher?
- Does the District currently use more than one program for dyslexia intervention? If not, can the District adopt a structured literacy program that is accredited by the International Dyslexia Association?
- Alternatively, has the District considered hiring a TOSA who is a Certified Structured Literacy Dyslexia Specialist with training that is aligned with the IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading?

PC3; School Safety, agenda item. This is a question regarding school safety at high schools. A friend's child who does not attend an IUSD school was able to just walk on to a IUSD high school and have lunch with their friends without checking in with anyone. This is concerning, as anyone who looks like a high school student can just walk on to campus without anyone noticing. This could be drug dealers and other dangerous people. IUSD needs to have more security on their high school campuses. This is also concerning for special needs students at these schools where anyone can walk on campus without being noticed if they look like they fit in.

PC4; Inclusion, UDL, positive example, non-agenda item. Robin stated she wanted to share positive feedback from a parent of a child with Down Syndrome at Portola Springs Elementary, whose teacher is clearly doing UDL. He is asking children who are non-verbal, who cannot read, to participate during an ELA assignment by reading what is on the screen. This is a great example of an IUSD teacher who's including our children, and she hopes that it inspires other educators who might be in the room, as well as IUSD staff to encourage these practices. She shared her positive experience as the Ability Awareness Week CAC rep at Westpark and Lakeside. Both principals and PTA have been very supportive, and April events have been planned. She encouraged more parents to become CAC reps and bring this event to their campus so that everyone can have a better understanding about different disabilities. She attended the most recent IUSD Health Committee meeting and the topic was sex education for students with disabilities, how it would be taught. The Health Committee is open to different speakers, so please let them know if anyone knows of someone who can deliver this education in an appropriate and respectful way for students with disabilities. She also stated that they are willing to work with parents to approach the topic with their child in an age and developmentally appropriate way.

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PC5; Annual Priorities, non-agenda item. Mrs. Kamm reiterated that providing input for priorities in the annual plan is important for the CAC. The first priority should be to understand where money is going in the budget. Parents should know how much of the budget for special education is going to direct services and programs for our kids. About 80-90% of the budget goes towards special education staff salaries and

benefits, which makes sense. However, some of that money goes toward administrative costs and attorneys' fees. So the second priority should be to reduce attorney's fees, as the district spends over a million dollars in litigation every year. Several SELPAS (based on her report and Melanie's findings) have an in-house counsel attorney who is salaried, and they have all said it was beneficial. Attorneys hourly fees are high and they are incentivized to prolong disputes. The money saved every year by having an in-house attorney can be used for behavioral aides, structured literacy, and other programs that go directly to our kids.

PC6; non-agenda item. Not present.

SELPA Executive Director Melanie Hertig introduced herself and thanked the new officers of the CAC, and other parents who have volunteered over the years to move the CAC forward. She stated that many staff members (program specialists, directors, service providers) were present, and that she usually asks staff to be at every meeting so that parents have someone to discuss their specific concerns with.

Legislative updates: Senate Bill 554, inclusion bill sponsored by Senator Rachel Ochoa. The two main components were 1) requirement for an administrative credential program to include coursework aligned with inclusive practices and 2) a workgroup would be formed to fund best practice guidance around staffing ratios for inclusion. Although the bill had bipartisan support the governor vetoed it. The SELPA has been in contact with Senator Ochoa who wants to continue working on something related to inclusion despite this bill not passing. A second bill, AB 447 is an inclusive college pilot program that would provide programs at Cal State and UC Universities for students with disabilities. A third bill, HB 248 would remove the MR language that was still present in government documents, websites, etc. Lastly, SB 323 is a bill that requires comprehensive safety plans at all school sites to address the needs of students with disabilities during an emergency. Irvine has already been working with Dr. Bayne, who oversees the district safety plans. The CAC has asked that the district set up a Q&A with Dr. Bayne, so they are planning a date at the beginning of the year.

She discussed the requirement for SELPAs to provide a new local plan every three years; this is the year the Irvine (single-district) SELPA will submit the local plan that will start 2024/25. Typically the previous local plan is provided and parents are able to comment/ask questions about it. In addition, an in-person session for the budget service plan is also held. Once feedback is received and the plan is adjusted based on parent input, that is presented to the CAC at the main meeting, then goes to the school board for approval at the June meeting. In addition, the annual budget and service plan have to get done yearly, and those are posted on the district website. She also mentioned the LCAP and said that during the next CAC meeting, Dr. Tammy Blakely who supports the district with developing the LCAP, will be here to discuss the process.

Additionally she shared that agenda items that are typically seen on the consent calendar during school board meetings are contracts for non-public agencies providing services, or for students who attend non-public schools. Also, there are settlement agreements for reimbursement to parents for prior services received, or sometimes for parent attorney fees.

Allison Robbins, Director of Special Education for secondary programming spoke about the professional learning communities, staff development and how it relates to special education. Special education is involved in all aspects of PLCs and staff development. As a district, we've identified continuous improvement efforts focused on: equity, excellence, diversity and inclusion. The special education department has focused in partnership with the CAC and the school sites around inclusive practices. These include the district-wide Inclusion Matters event, abilities awareness activities at school sites, and in supporting students in their least restrictive environment (LRE) through co-teaching. There was a professional learning event in August that all teachers and service providers attended, with a focus on providing students with high quality instruction in their LRE. There are also sessions on how to support facilitated IEPs. The next district wide, conference-style training is in February, where teachers will choose what sessions they go to. All the directors and special ed staff will be presenting that day, and will focus on inclusive practices and Universal Design for Learning. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), happen at school sites to improve instruction and assess what's working. Special education teachers also meet separately in larger groups to discuss best practices, inclusive practices that are happening that can be brought to other sites, as many schools only have only one or two Ed Specialists at their school. PLCs-happens year round. Melanie also mentioned that three professors from Concordia University will support training around UDL in February.

Chair Esther M went over the By-laws Committee Interest Form, there was a discussion and questions answered, the form will be emailed to all CAC members, who are encouraged to participate.

CAC Campus Rep, Angie F talked about how the CAC reps at each campus provide a voice, serve as a contact person at their school, promote inclusion, share resources, bring parents together, and plan Abilities Awareness Week activities. She welcomed 2 new campus reps; NPS and IATP.

Family Engagement, Ilaria S gave an update on the upcoming parent presentations and events; casual meet ups and part 2 of the Public Benefits presentation by State Council on Developmental Disabilities. She is working on the parent survey and hopes to send it out by the start of the year.

Vice Chair, Heena S gave an update on CAC Membership, which is at 185 members. All special ed families are encouraged to become members so they can receive all the regular updates. She gave a summary of the donations received; \$156 at the Stand, \$500 Corporate and \$100 from a parent. Funds go toward the activities. She is working on some new projects and will have more information soon.

Chair, Esther M stated that due to time constraints the update on the Abilities Awareness Event will be tabled to the February meeting.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:44am. First: Heena Shah. Second by: Ilaria Superti. Motion passed.

Sandra Albers, Secretary