

# **Community Advisory Committee for Special Education Report to the Board of Education**

February 26, 2008

## **Introduction of CAC Members**

Wanyee Francis-Babitsky, Chair  
Robin Hansen, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair  
Katy Franklin 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair  
Shelley Forrest, Parliamentarian  
Christina Chyan (new member)  
Carol Kocivar (SFUSD Ombudsperson)  
Chin Hong Lou (new member)  
Rachel Norton  
Amy Ottinger  
Joan Selby (new member)  
Linda Tung  
Lai Yee Wong (new member)  
Yun Kwong Wong  
Mee Kit Yip-Li (new member)

## **CAC Accomplishments 2006-2008**

### **Community Outreach**

- Posted a functioning web site at <http://www.sfcacsped.org>;
- Presented workshops on inclusion at the annual Information and Resources conference hosted by Support for Families of Children with Disabilities (SFCD);
- Presented workshop on encouraging interaction for children with autism at the annual TASH conference in San Francisco Feb. 1-2, 2008;
- Regularly attended Parent Involvement Coalition monthly meetings to collaborate with other parent groups operating within the school district;
- Collaborated with Parents for Public Schools and the Special Education department to present specialized enrollment workshops for parents of children eligible for special education at the SFUSD Enrollment Fair in October 2007;
- Continued to communicate with the Board of Education, administration and community at large through the monthly mailing of our agenda and minutes;
- Presented an inclusion presentation from the parent perspective to Ann Halvorsen's Education Specialist: Moderate/Severe Disabilities credential program class at California State University, East Bay (CSUEB), Department of Educational Psychology.
- Provided support and conducted outreach to members of Chinese-language parent support group and SFCD autism support group.

- Completed two parent education newsletters to be translated into Spanish and Chinese, printed and mailed to the family of every child enrolled in a SFUSD special education program (first newsletter was mailed in February 2007; the second is in dispute). Copies of these newsletters are attached to our report.

### **Advocacy**

- Accompanied the SELPA Director and the SFUSD Special Education Ombudsperson to Sacramento for SELPA Legislative Information Day in May 2007. We attended briefings on special education funding and related legislative issues, and met with four local representatives to advocate for better special education funding;
- Provided input to California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism;
- Created SFUSD Special Education resource guides for Parents for Public Schools and the sfschools.org web site;
- Supported families with limited English skills by attending IEP meetings at parent request and holding regular meetings to explain special education policies and procedures;
- Wrote regular columns for the SFCD newsletter, on topics such as advocating for your child, talking to policymakers, and navigating SFUSD's special education enrollment procedures;
- Members participated in numerous podcasts by "Senior Dad" Stan Goldberg about autism, special education issues and laws, and freedom of speech in schools. Podcasts are available at <http://www.srdad.com>.
- Members wrote guest School Beat columns for beyondchron.org on our advocacy trip to Sacramento (May 2007; copy attached); Special Education enrollment (December 2007; copy attached); and the District's attempt to censor our newsletter (February 2008).

### **Education and Building Capacity**

- Regularly attend seminars and workshops on disability-related topics, including:
  - Parent Education Network workshop featuring author Jonathan Mooney ("Learning Outside the Lines," "The Short Bus");
  - Pamela Wolfberg & Heather McCracken's Fostering Peer Play and Friendships in Children on the Autism Spectrum seminar;
  - CAL-TASH conference;
  - State of the City's Children Summit;
  - Michelle Garcia Winner and Carol Gray workshop on Social Thinking Strategies;
  - AASCEND workshops;
  - Temple Grandin presentation;
  - Relationship Development Intervention workshop;
  - SFCD Parent-Professional Workshops;
  - Small Schools by Design informational workshop.

## **Collaboration with SFUSD**

- Participate in various district committees on an ongoing basis, including the Inclusion Task Force and the Parent Involvement Coalition;
- Participate in monthly meetings with the SELPA Director;
- Shared our ideas and concerns with SFUSD's Special Education Ombudsperson on an ongoing basis;
- Met with Superintendent Carlos Garcia in Oct. 2007 to get acquainted and share our concerns about the state of the district's special education programs;
- Participate in the interagency Improving Transition Outcomes Project assisting youth with disabilities in building self-advocacy skills;
- Hosted two presentations at the San Francisco Public Library of Rick Lavoie's educational videos on helping children with learning disabilities succeed;
- Raised awareness and urged removal of insensitive and disrespectful language used in materials for training teachers and administrators on how to draft "legally defensible proposal refusal letters;"
- Worked with district to clarify classroom observation procedures for outside experts observing students on behalf of parents.

## **CAC Goals for 2008-2009**

### **Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee**

- Continue to work with SELPA Director, Special Education Department, and the Board of Education to monitor, evaluate and offer input into SFUSD's special education programs;
- Update the CAC Handbook to incorporate I.D.E.A. 2004 regulations and include information about transition and a transition-planning guide.
- Conduct a survey of special education parents prior to the next Special Education compliance self-review.

### **Training and Education Committee**

- Work with UESF and district staff to identify ongoing problems with Goalview implementation, and advocate for ongoing training and appropriate equipment--such as scanners, laptops, Internet connections in meeting areas--for teachers and staff.

### **Parent Involvement**

- Work with district to reach out to special education families so that we can more effectively communicate with them and steer them to resources in the community;
- Work to widely distribute our Special Education Comment Form to provide a means for families to increase awareness of their experiences in special education
- Continue to encourage participation of non-English speakers and other groups in the CAC to reflect the demographics of special education enrollment in the district.

### **Disability Awareness**

- Continue with advocacy activities such as letter-writing campaigns and contact with lawmakers;
- Create and present disability awareness training for principals and site administrators.

## **CAC Recommendations for District**

Items marked with a (\*) were previously recommended in our Sept. 2006 report and remain priorities for improving our district's special education services.

### **Communication**

- **Mailing our newsletter without prior censorship.** Parents need parent-to-parent communication to help them navigate the complex special education system. We are very disappointed that the district has curtailed our ability to communicate with and educate parents on strategies and advocacy tips all special education families need to know. To remove any confusion about the District's responsibility for the newsletter, we will insert a disclaimer on all issues stating that the content is for information only and does not necessarily reflect the official views of the San Francisco Unified School District.
- **Hire special education Parent Liaisons to specifically focus on SFUSD's underserved communities (Chinese-speaking, Spanish-speaking and low-income English speakers) to help parents navigate SFUSD's special education system.** These staff members would be attached to the Office of Parent Relations (not the Special Education department) and should be trained by Community Alliance for Special Education (CASE) or Protection & Advocacy (PAI) to ensure that they are familiar with special education terminology, procedures and safeguards.
- **Provide parents seeking special education placements for their children the same detailed enrollment information made available to parents of children seeking general education placements.**
- **Make written offers of placement (program *and* school site) in IEP meetings.**
- **Ensure the CAC, special and general education teachers have the opportunity to provide input into the Local Plan for Special Education, as stipulated in the Education Code. (30 EC 56205; 30 EC 56195.9)**
- **Have all special education "policies" and "procedures" in written form, available at every school site or downloadable from the district web site.** We have been concerned at several instances when policies were mischaracterized to parents or when conflicting information was distributed.

### **Goalview and IEP Procedures**

- **Supply teachers with the Internet access, computers, scanners, and training they need in order to use the Goalview system.** While we agree that computerized IEPs will be more efficient in the long run, it is not reasonable to expect teachers without computers, scanners or Internet access to somehow efficiently use the new system. The district needs to create a realistic Goalview transition plan for teachers who still lack necessary equipment.
- **The district should form a committee of interested parents, teachers and administrators to highlight needed updates to the Goalview system.** Teachers have told us repeatedly that the system as currently set up is not flexible enough to allow IEP teams to create truly individualized plans tailored to each individual student's needs.

- **Interpretation at IEP meetings should be carried out by qualified interpreters trained in appropriate special education terminology and familiar with special education procedures.** An important part of the school district's obligation is to ensure that non-English speaking parents meaningfully participate in the IEP process and that they are able to give their informed consent to assessment and other plans. We are concerned that many of the contracted interpreters are not knowledgeable enough about special education terminology and requirements to effectively assist the parent in understanding what is being said or proposed at an IEP meeting. (30 EC 56341.5(i))
- **Parents should also be routinely reminded that they are under no obligation to sign an IEP on the same day as the meeting.** Students with cognitive disabilities who are 18 years of age or older should not be asked to sign an IEP on their own behalf without their parent or guardian's informed consent.

### **Program Availability and Placement**

- **\*Track children transitioning from elementary to middle school or middle school to high school** to ensure that there is program availability at the next school level for children who will be moving up. Assist families with planning for these transitions.
- **\*Create additional full inclusion opportunities for all students in accordance with Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) requirements.** For example, there is currently one preschool full inclusion option, with space for 12 inclusion students. Students in elementary, middle and high school seeking inclusion placements are denied the same enrollment choices and opportunities offered to students without disabilities.
- **\*Create Special Day classrooms that provide the coursework for admission to the University of California system for those students capable of grade-level work.** Currently, no high school special day classroom provides coursework to fulfill U.C.'s foreign language requirement.
- **\*Create small class size options for students who are capable of grade-level or higher work but whose disabilities require small class sizes.** For example, there are currently no small classes for students identified as GATE/LD, or children with autism or Aspergers' Syndrome, who display average cognitive ability but are being placed in inappropriate classrooms.
- **Create pupil service for suspended special education students.** Currently students in special education who are suspended must stay home during their suspension because no services are available through the school district. This practice causes undue hardship because working parents must find another adult available at short notice to supervise their children or risk losing their jobs to stay home themselves. The school district should offer behavior modification services to students whose behavior is severe enough to cause a suspension in the first place.
- **Create an oversight committee to monitor evaluations and assessments, ensuring that assessments cover every area of suspected disability, and that children are not being misidentified.** For example, the number of African American and Latino students qualified under the "Emotionally Disturbed" category is disproportionate to the percentage of African American and Latino students in the district as a whole.

## Curriculum

- **\*Bring innovative and effective teaching approaches into the schools.** Lindamood-Bell has benefited students with difficulties in reading (decoding and comprehension), concept imagery and receptive and expressive language skills. Programs like Making Math Real and On Cloud Nine have helped many students struggling with math. Michelle Garcia-Winner's Social Thinking curriculum boosts the executive function abilities and interpersonal skills of many students with autistic spectrum disorders and nonverbal learning disorders. These are just a few methodologies that are proven to be successful. They are not available in our schools because our teachers have not been trained in them.
- **\*Increase the length of the school day for preschoolers in special education from 4 hours to 5 hours.** The National Research Council states that a minimum school program for preschool children with autism should be 25 hours a week.
- **IDEA 2004 stresses the importance of self-sufficiency, but currently our transition programs lack oversight from a credentialed teacher and a district-wide curriculum and standards.** SFUSD should establish materials and programs for teachers, parents and special education students who are at age 14 and above to help prepare them to enter the adult world.

## Staffing

- **\*Ensure that all Special Education Classes and Programs do not exceed their student capacity or staffing allocation ratios as outlined in the current UESF contract.** While administrators have regularly characterized the caseloads specified in section 9.5.7 of the contract as "guidelines" or "goals" rather than actual class size limits, section 31.8.6 of the UESF contract clearly states: *"The case load assigned to the Inclusion Support Team shall not exceed the class sizes specified in Section 9.5.7 of the Contract."*
- **\*Ensure that teachers hold the appropriate credential for the students being taught in their classrooms.**
- **Have a core group of substitutes for absent special education teachers and special education paraprofessionals that will be assigned to cover students.** Currently, if a substitute does not pick up an assignment, the child that staff person covers may go without support, particularly if the school is understaffed (as most are).

## **Attachments**

- Special Education Department Accomplishments, 2007-08
- February 2007 CAC Newsletter;
- October 2007 CAC Newsletter, now dated March 2008 and featuring a disclaimer, updated event information and member list;
- "School Beat: Special Education Parents Seek to Be Heard in Sacramento," by Rachel Powell Norton, Beyondchron.org, May 17 2007;
- "School Beat: San Francisco's 'School Choice' System Fraught with Bias for Special Education Students," by Katy Franklin, Beyondchron.org, Dec. 6, 2007.

**San Francisco Unified School District  
Special Education Department Accomplishments  
2007-2008 School Year**

## **Overview**

### **Student Achievement**

#### **San Francisco Is The Only Large Urban District In California To Meet Proficiency Targets For Special Education Students**

This year, San Francisco Unified School District was the only large urban district in California to meet the federal proficiency targets for students with disabilities who took the state tests in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

### **Expanded Programs and Services**

Based on a highly successful pilot program at Marina Middle School, Special Education Services implemented new intervention programs in literacy at some elementary, middle, and high schools. It also has significantly expanded program options in the areas of autism, deaf/hard of hearing, and transition as well as professional development for staff.

### **Technology: District Wide Implementation of Goalview**

District wide implementation of Goalview to replace paper referral, assessment, and IEP process.

### **Community Partnerships and Outreach**

Special education services has expanded programs for students and parents through new community partnerships:

- **Special Olympics** new in-school program for students with disabilities. Fall program schools: George Peabody, R.L. Stevenson, Tenderloin Community Sanchez (K-8) McKinley, Francis Scott Key, Sunnyside, Glen Park, Avarado, Fairmount
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- **The Arts Residency Interventions in Special Education (ARISE) Project** for targeted 3rd through 5th grade Inclusion classrooms and Special Day Classes. Cesar Chavez, ER Taylor, Ulloa, R.L. Stevenson, Starr King.
- **Your First IEP Meeting, A Parent Guide**, produced by SFUSD and Schwablearning, distributed to all schools in English, Spanish and Chinese and is available to download on the district web site.

## Details

### Student Achievement

This year, San Francisco Unified School District was the only large urban district in California to meet the federal proficiency targets for students with disabilities who took the state tests in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

The Adequate Yearly Progress target in 2007 for all students in both general education and special education was 23% proficient in English-Language Arts (ELA) and 23.7% proficient in Mathematics. SFUSD students with disabilities met these targets exactly in ELA and exceeded the target by more than a percentage point in Math

### Expanded Programs and Services

#### Programs

- **Literacy Intervention programs**
  - Literacy intervention programs using Voyager and Read 180 have been introduced at El Dorado, Junipero Serra, Paul Revere, Marina, Hoover, Horace Mann, Visitacion Valley MS, Willie Brown, and Ida B. Wells.
- **Autism Programs:**
  - Expansion of SFUSD in-home ABA program (LEAP) through vendorizing with Golden Gate Regional Center (GGRC). We are now serving 2 year old children on the autism spectrum
  - Two new Pre-K classes: Sheridan ES and Ortega ES. At Sheridan ES we have developed a highly successful reverse mainstreaming program between the Pre-School For All class and our special education class. They are adjoining classrooms.
  - Planning to open two new Pre-K classes due to increased student enrollment
  - Expanded TEACCH Programs: Grattan, Marina, Lowell, Washington
  - High Functioning Autism: Garfield, Roosevelt, and Lowell
- **Deaf/Hard of Hearing Programs**
  - Pre-K Auditory/Oral class at Lafayette ES
  - Pre-K Total communication class at Chavez ES
  - Itinerant teachers of deaf
  - Additional classrooms acoustically modified
  - Developed an equitable enrollment process for deaf/hard of hearing students
- **Transition Programs**
  - Marshall, Balboa
  - Implemented a new Adopt-A-School Program between San Francisco Community College (SFCC) and SFUSD, whereby a community college counselor will orient students on graduation track at Washington and Wells high schools to the SFCC campus and programs

- **Compliance**
- Continue to ensure that each school site's academic plan includes provisions for ensuring compliance with previously identified CDE areas of non-compliance.
- Continue to ensure that all school sites have a speech and language pathologist assigned. Designed a comprehensive service delivery and collaborative model for Speech and Language and have implemented the new model.

## **Services:**

### **Program Placement**

Special Education Services continues to work with the Program Placement Committee to redistribute special education programs across all quadrants of the City and to increase the continuum of service across schools. This includes new programs at Feinstein, Ulloa, Sutro, Grattan, Lafayette, Presidio and Sheridan.

### **Alternative Dispute Resolution**

Special Education Services trained 38 participants, 18 parents/community members and 20 educators, during 5 days in April and May 2006. We have conducted with some of these participants successful mediation sessions and have resolved issues and disagreements between parents and staff.

### **Para Substitute Pool**

Special Education Services and Human Resources have worked together to create 10 new Core paraprofessional substitutes to add to the substitute pool to address high need areas.

### **Program Development for our Autism Programs/Services**

- TEACCH Professional Development and implementation in Special Day classes across district
- On site support from autism content specialists and autism resource paras
- Professional development for teachers and paras

### **Behavioral Support for students with emotional disturbance**

- Site support for ED students to include developing and implementing class and individual behavior systems, coaching, etc.
- ProAct professional development for teachers and paraprofessionals
- Expanded mental health partnership with Community Behavioral Health Services and monthly meetings to strengthen partnerships

### **Deaf/Hard of Hearing Initiative**

- Developed 3 year strategic plan to address growing population
- Developed a continuum of services and programs to address a continuum of communication modalities (ASL, Total Communication, Auditory/Oral)
- Provide multidisciplinary services and supports to magnet schools

- **Professional Development**

Expanded Professional Development opportunities to include Behavior De-escalation strategies, Autism techniques (TEACCH), Differentiated Instruction, SB 1895, Auditory Processing Workshop, Transition to High School, Core Curriculum, Legal Issues for Administrators, Alignment of Curriculum to Standards, Para training, Inter-departmental professional development, Northern California Diagnostic Center Programs and *Let Them Hear Foundation* professional development

## **Community Partnerships and Outreach**

- Continue to collaborate to present the *Developing Minds* Video Series.
- FAT CITY workshops videos with CAC at SF public library
- Continued monthly meetings with UESF
- Continue to update and expand special education information and resources available on SFUSD web site
- In coordination with EPC, provided ***Special Education Enrollment Guide*** for families enrolling for 2007-2008 school year
- Sponsored Transition from Early Start to Pre-K and from Pre-K to Kindergarten workshops for special education parents with Support for Families of Children with Disabilities
- Collaboration with SparkTop to bring school assembly programs to elementary schools on learning disabilities: Sample schools last year: Sherman, Glen Park, Malcolm X Academy, Dianne Feinstein, Cesar Chavez, George Moscone, Sheridan, Clarendon, West Portal Bessie Carmichael, Jose Ortega
- Outreach for surrogates through CASA trainings and community organizations
- Ombudsperson to assist parents and caregivers in problem resolution
- Monthly meetings with Community Advisory Committee (CAC)