

Special Education Parent Newsletter

Fall 2022

Family Outreach and Partnership

On behalf of our Special Education Department, we are excited to launch our first SPED Parent Newsletter for the 2022-23 school year! We plan to release parent newsletters in the Fall, Winter, and Spring in order to update families on the progress of our initiatives, programs, community events, and general information. Along with our Teachers and Aides, we have a knowledgeable, skilled and hard-working District Office team that provide support and leadership to our sites every day. Please meet our amazing team from 25 Churchill virtually through our updated [PAUSD Special Education website!](#)

Along with parent newsletters, we've been hard at work uploading helpful information on our website including Terms commonly used in Special Education and brochures that describe our various programs. Our goal and focus areas in Special Education for the 2022-23 school year can also be found under the [PAUSD Promise webpage](#). Additionally, the two Directors of Special Education were invited to the September 13 Board Meeting to provide a brief update regarding our reorganization and focus areas relative to the PAUSD Promise. If you're interested in reading the Board report, click [here](#) or scroll to the bottom of this [link](#) and click on the video under Staff Reports- Special Education Organization and Support Systems to see our presentation.

We are eager to stay connected to our parent community and get your input on your child's experiences and services in Special Education. If you haven't already heard of the [Palo Alto CAC](#), please check out their website and consider them as another valuable resource as PAUSD and the Palo Alto CAC meet frequently for collaboration. We are currently working on a Parent Survey that will be launched soon and we'd love to get your input. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your child's education and we look forward to our continued partnership this year.

Special Education Department Reorganization

Our Special Education Department is going through a transformation as we reorganize our departmental work. In years prior, there were two Directors leading separate teams at the elementary and secondary levels. This year, we are functioning as one department and jointly supporting students Preschool through Adult School, ages 3-22, without the elementary and secondary divisions. Cindy and Amanda have both had long and varied experiences in education that complement our each other and our leadership in the department.

Our District team launched the 2022-23 school year by spending two days together at a retreat to discuss our reorganization, analyze our team strengths, and set forth priorities for the year. We also spent time defining the roles and responsibilities of our District team that include Coordinators, Program Specialists, a Mental Health Manager, a Behavior Manager, and Office Staff. If you click on our [“Meet the Team” link](#) and scroll to the bottom, the teams that support sites are listed.



SELT Team- (top row, left-right): Marissa Ciardella, Laurie Garcia, Mari Briones Shively, Jeannie Ortiz, Tina Diaz, Amanda Boyce, Lissette Lopez, Christina Dias, Teri Lee, Nestor Ramos (bottom row, left-right): Sakura Oh, Melissa Brown, Cindy Loleng-Perez, Angela Hernandez, Cassidy Walko

Community Building

In addition to building our District team, we are honored to be in close collaboration with our Palo Alto CAC organization. Along with PTAC, we co-hosted a Fall community building event, “Family Fun Day”, on, September 18, at Addison School. PAUSD staff and families of children with IEPs, 504s, and/or learning differences were invited and despite the questionable weather, it was a great turnout! We were grateful for the many community partners at the event who provided the following activities: building using the creativity cart offered by the PAUSD Curriculum & Career Education, story time hosted by Paly Child Development Pathways, art and science hosted by the Innovation Youth and Boy Scout Troop 52, and music played by Son and Dad Garageband by a Gunn Student. Additionally, participants enjoyed Artisan cookies & lemonade provided by Ada’s Cafe. We are looking forward to planning and hosting more community building events this year!

Professional Development Days

One of the most valuable aspects of working in PAUSD are the plentiful opportunities for staff to participate in a variety of growth opportunities and trainings. We launched the year with training in one of our priority areas, Co-Teaching; a learning model where a general education and special education work together to deliver instruction to a variety of students. In August, Administrators from Paly, Gunn, JLS, Fletcher, Greene, Briones, and Greendell participated in a focused session hosted by the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) on how to build inclusive practices through Co-Teaching. Throughout September and October, Teachers from these sites are participating in a similar training with their co-teaching partners. After the initial training, coaches from SCCOE will be observing the co-teaching classrooms to offer feedback and provide next steps for collaboration. We will continue with cycles of inquiry and reflection and hope to expand the learning opportunities to the other PAUSD sites next year.

Our Sped Aides have also been growing their skills this year. During our August and October Staff Development days, Aides participated in the following trainings: Safety Care, Instructional Assistant Onboarding, or Accommodations & Modifications- How to Support Students with IEPs in General, and Understanding the (13) Areas of Special Ed Eligibility. Our Aides play a crucial role in our student supports and we are grateful that they are eager to learn.

Our Mild/Moderate Sped Teachers have been engaged in learning new District curriculum and assessments. This year, Elementary Education is implementing a new English Language Arts and Science Curriculum. Additionally, Teachers have been trained in our new i-Ready assessments which will measure reading skills and provide data on possible IEP goals.

Our Moderate/Severe/Futures Teachers have also been exploring a variety of curriculum this year. For the 2022-23 school year, PAUSD purchased Unique so our Program Specialists and PATCH teams have been visiting individual classes to work 1:1 with our teachers in addition to hosting an overview during our August Staff Development Day. During our October Staff Development Day, we continued to explore other programs including Star/Links, Teachtown, and Readtopia so that we could compare content and usability of these various programs in preK- post secondary as we hone in on preferred curriculum. All of these professional development opportunities align with one of our Key Strategies in the PAUSD Promise- Special Education and Inclusion: *Provide standards aligned curriculum and materials for classrooms supporting students with extensive service needs uniformly from elementary through secondary programs.*

Alternative Programs at Cubberly

PAUSD is proud to offer Alternative Programs at Cubberley for students in grades 6-12. The Intensive Individualized Program (IIP) provides personalized learning through a combination of individual and small group, direct instruction. Students spend approximately 10-20 hours per week on academic work. Students who may benefit from the program include those who may need a smaller, more intimate learning environment, 5th year students with significant credit deficiencies, students desiring to take GED or CHSPE and students transitioning from a Non-Public School or Residential Treatment Center.

This year, PAUSD launched its second alternative program at Cubberley, the Intensive Therapeutic Program (ITP). This program also serves students in grades 6-12 whose mental health, behavioral, and emotional difficulties have resulted in impairment of major life activities and require supportive and intensive interventions. Educational Specialist and Mental Health Therapist work together to

provide therapeutic activities including individual and group therapy, behavior management, crisis intervention, and family therapy as needed.

We are proud to offer alternative programs to our students in PAUSD with IEPs in lieu of non-public school placements. Our department is continuing to consider how to expand and offer additional alternative placements at all grade levels with a variety of supports. Feel free to talk to your Sped School team for more information.

Upcoming Events

Special Olympics at PAUSD

Since 2016, [PAUSD has partnered with Special Olympics North California](#). Sports provide great opportunities for special education students and their peers to work together as teammates to create inclusive school communities. Parents, students and other community members are invited to cheer on students in this event of the season. Hundreds of student athletes from our elementary, middle and high schools demonstrate their skills in track and field events (running, throwing and jumping) as well as basketball and soccer.

October 14, 2022 - Soccer @ Greene MS.

- 9:30-12:00 am
 - 9:30 Opening Ceremonies
 - Games from 9:45-11:30
 - Awards to follow the games

March 24, 2023 - Basketball @ Fletcher MS

- More information as the date gets closer

May 19, 2023 - Track and Field @ Gunn HS

- More information as the date gets closer

Unity Day - Oct 19th

This is the 10th year anniversary of our Districtwide participation in Unity Day. Staff, students, and families are encouraged to wear orange to support a unified commitment to prevent bullying through acceptance, inclusion, and kindness. Students will be engaged in Unity Day themed activities such as building school-wide unity chains, making posters to positive messages of acceptance and inclusion. Libraries and classrooms will highlight books focused on empathy, kindness, and perspective-taking to support continued work toward building an environment where all students feel they belong. All staff and secondary students will receive PAUSD Unity Day buttons, and elementary students will receive PAUSD Unity Day stickers and "Kindness Rocks" pencils. We are looking forward to this special and inclusive celebration!