

Special Education Breakout Session Notes for LCAP Community Meeting Feedback
Palo Alto Unified School District - SDC Room
December 14, 2017 5:00-7:00pm

Introductions:

Judy Argumedo, Ed.D, Director of Academic Supports-Presenter
Alma Ellis, Director of Special Education/Elementary -Presenter
Stephanie Sheridan, Director of Special Education/Secondary – Presenter
Christin S. CSC/Parent
Genavae Dixon, Gunn High School Wellness Coordinator
Melissa Anderson, Parent
Kathy Jordan, 7th grader at Jordan
Tod Collins, Parent of a Graduate of PAUSD
Beti Loomis, Note Taker

The presenters introduce themselves to the audience during the breakout session of meeting and give an overview of the California Dashboard data results which produced reports that demonstrate how schools, local educational agencies (LEAs), and student groups perform against state and local measures with the purpose of assisting in identifying the strengths and areas of improvement.

The presenters ask the participants to offer their predictions in regards to the results focusing on Special Education.

The predictions are as follows:

- Performance low
- Absenteeism high,
- Struggling academically
- Graduation Rate is lower
- Difference in A to G for those students in Special Education (college readiness?)

Then the group is asked to look at the report for the actual results and offer their assumptions.

The assumptions of the group are as follows:

- Our funding is higher but our performance is lower.
- Compared to the state benchmark, PAUSD is below the benchmark.
- The result shows a disproportion to what is going on in the classroom according to what parents are being told at parent teacher conferences often is communicated that student is doing well.
- It is important to examine how the state sets the benchmark.

- Suspension rate is medium as compared to other districts in the states, yet low compared internally within PAUSD. Focus on an area that we need to address is more important. Suspension rate is a crude indicator. It is not showing what actually might be happening. Needs to be clear. It is helpful to take a look at individual sites to see if there is a pattern at particular sites. Previous data from 2016 was revealing of students who were suspended. Of PAUSD students who were suspended in 2016, 72% percent were SpEd. It would be beneficial to both the students with disabilities to ensure that their IEPs are appropriately implemented to assist them to avoid any possible suspension due to lack of appropriate implementation of their IEPs. This would also assist the other students in the student body as well, and potentially improve the school climate (Local priority 6) as a whole as students with disabilities receive the services they are entitled to under law. Also, PAUSD's performance in State priority 6 (Suspension rate) may be improved as 72% of those suspended in PAUSD are students with disabilities. Thus, making sure to fully and appropriately implement the students' IEPs could make a large difference for these individual students and their possibility of suspension, as well as to the District's performance in this area (State priority 6) these evaluate IEP to ensure that the IEP is implemented under the law requirements.
- More District Behaviorist are needed across the district.
- Better effort to accumulation of data current in regards to suspensions, bullying, mental health etc. it is important and necessary to gather this data to assist in the drafting of behavior plans. Doing so will be beneficial to assist in lowering the suspension rate of those students with disabilities.
- Behaviorist are critical to the IEP process. Currently the district staff's one behavior manager, three behavior specialists and nine behavior coaches. The district is working towards hiring more. The focus in this area is at the elementary with overlap in middle school and available in high school as needed. Follow school calendar. Behaviorists support could be a direct service or as an as needed basis dependent on the IEP decision. At the elementary level, the decision is based on the collaboration with counselors, social workers and ERMHS counselors. It is important to include the parent for a different perspective. Manifestation Determination Meetings are held to determine whether behavior that resulted in an expulsion of the students with disabilities is part of their disability. If it is determined that the behavior is part of the disability the law protects the student under the IEP.

The group is asked to provide their theory on the causes.

Their theories on the causes are as follows:

- Absenteeism= A lot of reasons are predictable when it comes to child's disabilities. Proper identification is crucial.
- Graduation= Full parent engagement; Find ways to make parents become valuable members; lack of involvement is related to absenteeism.
- Academic trouble

- Social emotional; lack of access to services due to too few staff support, i.e. not enough ERHMS specialist.
- Inability to identify students in Middle School who will need support as Freshman and through High School.
- The omission of college conversations with students with disabilities.
- Also identify students who are likely to be suspended early on.

At the conclusion, the group is asked to offer solutions.

These are their solutions:

- Increase in staffing. Need professional people to find ways to implement some of the services required by law such as Special Education Teachers, Behaviorists, and mental health therapist.
- Appropriately implementing IEPs that should include the judgment of the parents. Stephanie shares with the group that every single parent who has a student with an IEP will be issued a parent satisfaction survey based on annual or triannual IEP meetings which is a confidential survey soliciting feedback.
- Take a deeper look at what inclusion means. In order to make a real inclusion.
- Early identification is important.
- Need a platform to support all services.

The presenters inform the group that there will be two more meetings in February and ask for their feedback on whether this process was worthwhile.

The group recommends the following improvements but overall is pleased with the outcome and format of the meeting:

- Focus groups that includes more staff speaking to frontline issues
- Clarification to how our input is to be incorporated/suggestions taken seriously.
- A lot of behavior issues happen during transition periods in secondary/ supervision is minimal during the transition period. Data to reflect what happens during transitions is needed.
- Stress mental health and how it helps
- Benchmarks relative to other districts not just within the district.

Meeting adjourned.