



**Division of Special Education**

# **Listen and Learn Campaign**

Summary and Action Steps, Spring 2025





**Alberto M. Carvalho**  
Superintendent

I am proud to present the Los Angeles Unified School District's report on the Special Education Listening Campaign—an initiative that reflects our unwavering commitment to equity, inclusion, and excellence for every student, especially those with disabilities.

This campaign was not just an exercise in outreach; it was a call to action. We set out to hear directly from our families, students, educators, administrators, and community members—and what we heard was clear: we must do more and expand our work in supporting our students.

Their voices were powerful. Their stories were honest. And their expectations demand nothing less than meaningful change. We are listening—and we are acting.

This campaign affirms our legal and moral obligation to uphold the rights of students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). But we are not stopping at compliance. We are committed to building a system that is inclusive by design—where students with disabilities are not just accommodated, but truly supported, empowered, and celebrated.

As we look ahead, the insights gathered through this campaign will drive our decisions, guide our investments, and shape the future of special education in Los Angeles Unified. Our students deserve more than promises—they deserve progress. And we will deliver.

Thank you to every voice that contributed to this effort. Together, we are forging a future where every child—regardless of ability—is seen, heard, supported, and Ready for the World.



**Dr. Karla Estrada**  
Deputy Superintendent

As a lifelong educator and advocate for equity in learning, I believe that the voices of our students, families, and educators must guide the instructional journey of Los Angeles Unified. The Special Education Listen and Learn Campaign represents a critical part of that journey—an intentional effort to hear directly from those most impacted by our programs and services for students with disabilities.

Los Angeles Unified is deeply committed to ensuring every student—regardless of ability—has access to a rigorous, high-quality education that prepares them to graduate Ready for the World. This campaign has allowed us to gather authentic feedback on what is working, what must improve, and where we can grow in our mission to serve all learners with excellence and dignity.

This report reflects what we heard and reaffirms our responsibility to act. From IEP quality and service delivery to inclusive classroom practices and post-secondary readiness, the insights gathered will directly inform our instructional priorities. We know that achieving strong outcomes for students with disabilities requires more than compliance—it demands thoughtful, responsive teaching and systems designed with access, equity, and high expectations at the core.

Throughout my career—as a paraeducator, teacher, administrator, and now as Deputy Superintendent—I've seen firsthand the incredible potential of our students with disabilities. Their success is our success, and their inclusion enriches the learning experience for all.

As you review this report, I encourage you to also explore our LAUSD Strategic Plan, which aligns our goals and actions to measurable outcomes. Together, we must continue to build a district where every student receives the support they need to thrive—academically, socially, and emotionally.

Thank you to every family, student, educator, and staff member who contributed to this campaign. Your voice is not only valued—it is essential to building a more inclusive and effective LAUSD.



**Anthony Aguilar**  
Chief of Special  
Education &  
Specialized Programs

Dear LAUSD Community,

I want to extend my sincere gratitude to all the students, families, educators, and community members who participated in the Division of Special Education's Listen and Learn Campaign. Your voices are invaluable in shaping the future of special education in our district.

The Listen and Learn sessions provided valuable insight into the strengths, challenges, and opportunities within our programs. Your input will guide planning, enhance services, and promote inclusive learning environments. This campaign reaffirms our commitment to collaboration and the use of stakeholder feedback to strengthen the support for all students.

Thank you for being an essential part of this important process.

Sincerely,

Anthony Aguilar  
Chief of Special Education and Specialized Programs



**Dr. Jose Soto**  
Executive Director,  
Division of Special  
Education

Dear LAUSD Family,

I am proud to share the important work the Division of Special Education has undertaken through our Listen and Learn Campaign. This initiative was designed to engage with our students, families, educators, and community partners to gather valuable feedback that will shape the future of special education in LAUSD.

Through these sessions, we heard firsthand about the strengths of our programs, the challenges faced, and the opportunities for growth. Your insights will directly inform our planning and decision-making as we work to enhance services, improve supports, and create more inclusive learning environments for all students.

This campaign reaffirms our commitment to collaboration and continuous improvement. We will use your feedback to refine our policies, strengthen resources, and ensure that every student receives the high-quality education they deserve.

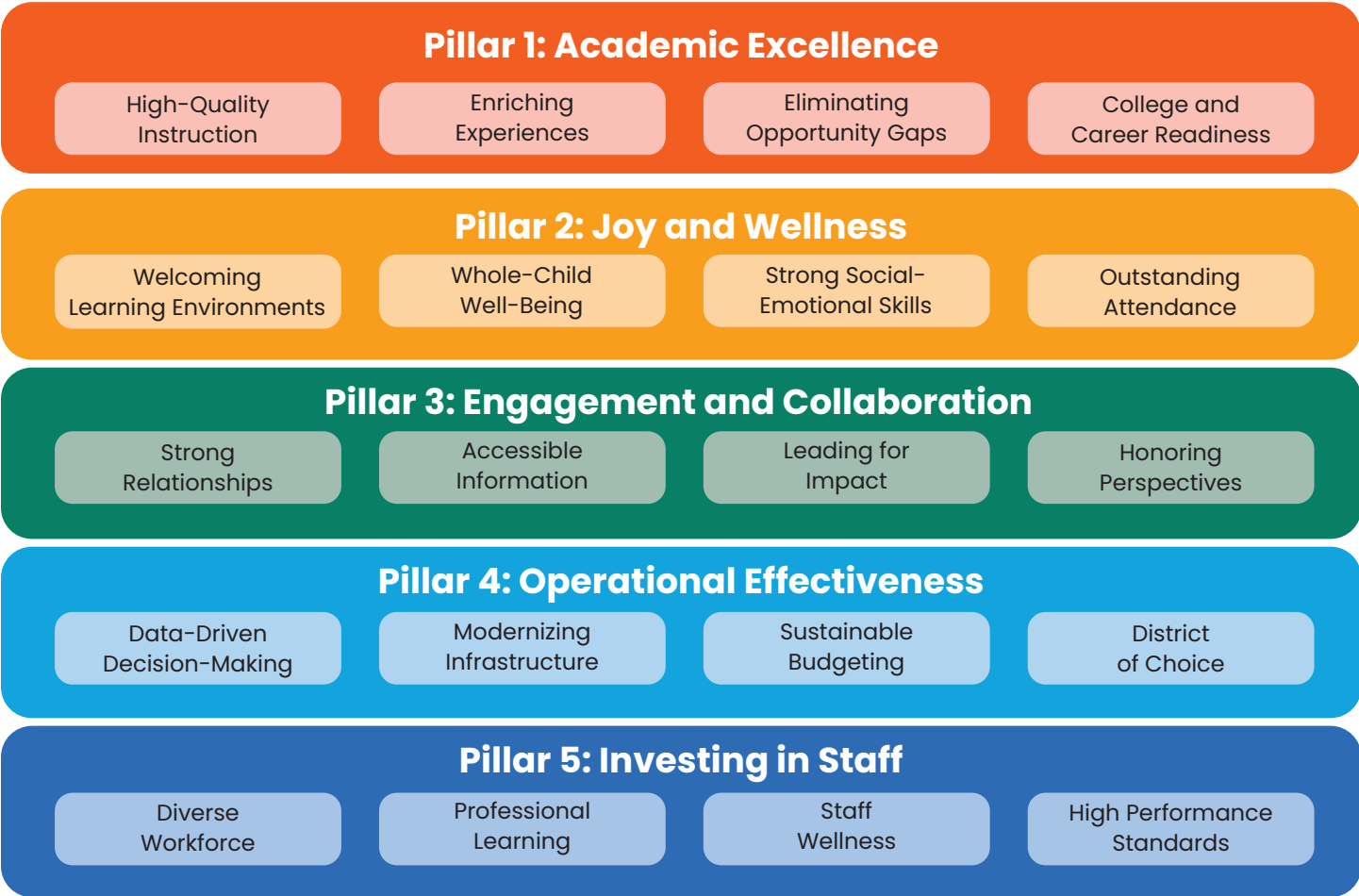
Your voices were instrumental in this journey, and we look forward to our continued collaboration in support of all students.

Respectfully,

Jose Soto  
Executive Director, Special Education



# LAUSD Pillars and Priorities



## LAUSD Core Beliefs

### Equity

We believe we must unapologetically call out and close the persistent opportunity gaps that disproportionately impact Black, Latinx, foster, unhoused, LGBTQIA+, immigrant, and other historically underserved communities. We must disrupt the generational, systemic manifestations of discrimination, racism, and bigotry affecting our schools.

We will actively identify and amplify the successes of our schools that eliminate inequities. We will strategically allocate resources to our students and families to ensure that students are celebrated and supported.

### Collaboration

We believe we exist to serve the students and families of Los Angeles Unified, and we acknowledge the many voices who have a vested interest in the success of Los Angeles Unified. Our decisions, policies, and programs are designed with learners at the center.

All actions are informed by listening and learning from the community through open dialogue to create authentic partnership opportunities so that our entire extended community may contribute toward student success.

### Excellence

We believe the communities served by Los Angeles Unified deserve the most exemplary education that prepares all students to achieve postsecondary excellence. For our community, we must deliver schools and an entire system that meets the promise of all of our unique students.

## OUR VISION

Our vision is to inspire all students to reach their maximum potential as productive and responsible citizens.

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to provide leadership, guidance, and support to the school community in order to maximize learning for all students within an inclusive environment so that each student will contribute to and benefit from our diverse society.

### Division of Special Education Priorities

#### Instruction

- Differentiation
- High Expectations
- Inclusive Practices



### Connection to LAUSD Pillars and Priorities

#### Pillar 1

Academic Excellence

#### Pillar 2

Joy and Wellness

#### Substantial Compliance

- IEP Compliance
- Service Tracking
- Initial IEP Timelines



#### Pillar 4

Operational Effectiveness

#### Engagement / Communication

- Family Academy
- Parent Ambassadors
- Parent Workshops



#### Pillar 3

Engagement and Collaboration

#### Operations

- Extended School Year
- Program Support
- Staffing



#### Pillar 4

Operational Effectiveness

#### Pillar 5

Investing in Staff

# Students with Disabilities Demographic Information

In the 2023–24 school year, one in six students in the District had a disability.

## Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

During the 2023–24 school year, the District educated 70,320 students with IEPs. Specific Learning Disability 33.24%, Autism 27.60%, Speech or Language Impairment 16.43%, and Other Health Impairment 12.3% are identified as the highest count of disability types. The chart below summarizes this information by disability type for the 2023–24 school year.

Students with Disabilities with IEPs – Disability Type	Count of Students with Disabilities	Percent of Students with Disabilities
Specific Learning Disability	23,375	33.24%
Autism	19,437	27.60%
Speech or Language Impairment	11,456	16.43%
Other Health Impairment	8,680	12.30%
Intellectual Disability	3,243	4.59%
Hard of Hearing /Hearing Impairment	1,085	1.56%
Multiple Disabilities	1,048	1.45%
Emotional Disability	989	1.41%
Orthopedic impairment	509	0.74%
Deafness	229	0.31%
Visual Impairment	207	0.29%
Traumatic Brain Injury	54	0.07%
Deaf-Blindness	8	0.01%
Grand Total	70,320	100.00%



# Strengthening Our Commitment Through Listening and Learning

## INTRODUCTION

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is dedicated to ensuring that all students, including those with disabilities, receive the high-quality education they deserve. In alignment with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), we uphold the right of students with disabilities to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This means providing the necessary supports, services, and accommodations to help every student succeed in the least restrictive environment.

In support of this commitment, LAUSD launched the Listen and Learn Campaign, an endeavor designed to gather insights from students, families, educators, and community members about the experiences of students with disabilities. Through community forums, surveys, and discussions, we engaged in meaningful conversations about special education services, inclusive practices, accessibility, and additional needs.

This report summarizes our key findings, highlighting successes, challenges, and opportunities in how LAUSD supports students with disabilities. From early intervention programs and IEPs to specialized instruction, behavioral supports, and transition services, we recognize the vital role of these services in fostering student achievement. The feedback we received will guide future efforts to enhance inclusive practices, improve access, and ensure that every student—regardless of ability—has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

As we reflect on what we've learned, we remain committed to action, accountability, and collaboration with our school communities. Together, we can build a more inclusive and equitable education system that empowers all students to succeed.

## PURPOSE

The Division of Special Education embarked on a Listen and Learn Campaign to gather insights highlighting successes, challenges, and opportunities that will support the Division of Special Education as it continues to implement obligations under the IDEA.

## METHODOLOGY

The Division of Special Education's Listen and Learn campaign employed a mixed-methods approach to data collection, integrating both qualitative and quantitative strategies to gather comprehensive insights. Qualitative data was collected through focus group stakeholder sessions, which provided rich, descriptive information about participants' experiences, perspectives, and ideas around improving special education services in LAUSD. In addition, quantitative and qualitative data was gathered via electronic survey, which yielded measurable, numerical insights and robust descriptive information that was analyzed to identify patterns and trends across a larger population.

# CAMPAIGN PROCESS

**1 LEARN**  
Create opportunities to listen to the community

**2 LISTEN**  
Hold conversations with the community to understand our challenges and opportunities

**3 ASSESS**  
Collect, analyze and share information on the status of student achievement and wellness

**4 ACT**  
Identify actions, key strategies and plans for sustained success

The Division of Special Education followed a strategic approach using Learn, Listen, Assess, and Act to complete the Listen and Learn campaign. We began learning by listening to input from students, families, educators, and stakeholders to understand the needs and challenges in special education. We then assessed the feedback to identify areas for improvement and ensure actionable insights. The Division will act by sharing findings with stakeholders and implementing data-informed strategies to improve policies, practices, and resources for special education students and their families.

## CAMPAIGN ACTION STEPS

**Engaged with the community by hosting Listen and Learn focus group sessions** across the District during Fall 2024 to engage a broad range of stakeholders while capturing participants' qualitative responses.

- 31 focus group sessions held across the District
- Focus groups included: Parents, Teachers, Administrators, Community Members, and Educational Partners

**Launched a Listen and Learn Campaign digital survey** across the District to gather additional feedback from stakeholders.

- Over 1,200 survey responses collected from various stakeholder groups, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, educational partners

**Analyzed stakeholder feedback** to identify emergent themes and key findings.

**Requested recommendations and strategies** from expert partners within the special education field.

**Used the data, recommendations, and strategies** to drive Division of Special Education planning through informed decision making that will improve special education services and policies for our students.

**Developed a campaign summary** that summarizes the findings, recommendations, and next steps.

**Disseminated the findings** with all stakeholder groups to promote transparency and to outline the findings, recommendations, and next steps.



## QUANTITATIVE SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 1,226 individuals responded to the survey. The chart below provides a summary of the responses received.

Participant Type	Count of Participants	Percent of Participants
Parent/Guardian	536	44%
Teacher	319	26%
Assistant Principals	90	7%
Central Office Staff	86	7%
Special Education Trainee/Assistant/Healthcare Assistant	59	5%
Region Office Staff	47	4%
School Principal	42	3%
Counselor/School Psychologist	19	2%
Community Member/Partner	18	1%
Student (4th-12th Grade)	10	1%

1,145 participants answered the question “How satisfied are you with the special education services provided to students in LAUSD?”

Response	Count of Response	Percent of Response
1 - Not at all Satisfied	105	9%
2 - Somewhat Dissatisfied	185	16%
3 - Neutral	440	38%
4 - Satisfied	288	25%
5 - Extremely Satisfied	127	11%



*“We have exceptional teachers and assistants. We have a variety of support systems for our students.”*  
*–LAUSD Parent*

# FINDINGS

## Pillar 1: Academic Excellence

High-Quality  
Instruction

Enriching  
Experiences

Eliminating  
Opportunity Gaps

College and  
Career Readiness

### EMERGENT THEMES

Feedback that focused on Academic Excellence highlighted several key themes. Respondents expressed appreciation for the variety of specialized services and programs available, such as Career and Transition Centers (CTC), which support lifelong learning and growth. The availability of digital tools and specialized materials was also recognized for enhancing student access to the curriculum and promoting active participation in classroom activities. Additionally, the importance of inclusive settings for students with disabilities, supporting them while they learn alongside their general education peers, was emphasized.

Improving academic and behavioral progress for students with disabilities was noted as an area of focus. While there are a variety of programs and supports in place for students, respondents indicated that implementation of instructional strategies can vary between classrooms. It was noted that, while students with disabilities have made academic gains, there continues to be room for improvement. While the benefits of inclusive opportunities were acknowledged, there was a call for further training for all staff, including general education teachers, in both academic and behavioral supports. Finally, there was a call for enhanced behavior support and specialized training to better meet the needs of students with disabilities.

### HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION

Improving educational outcomes for students with disabilities by upholding high expectations and providing rigorous instruction tailored to their individual needs is essential for their success. Every student should be challenged to reach their full potential. Through personalized educational experiences, differentiated support, and a nurturing environment, we ensure that students with disabilities are equipped with the necessary tools and opportunities to thrive.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

- Development of Special Education Classroom Look-Fors aligned with the Teaching and Learning Framework to guide school leaders in monitoring and enhancing instructional effectiveness.
- Creation of a Division of Special Education Instructional Resource Guide to support educators in delivering high-quality, inclusive instruction.
- Implementation of a structured literacy-aligned reading intervention designed to support students who are experiencing reading difficulties.
- Introduction of the Diploma with the Alternate Assessment Exemption to ensure all students graduate fully prepared for postsecondary success.
- Provide instructional coaching to empower educators in driving academic achievement for students with disabilities.
- Collaboration on summer teacher professional development with the Division of Instruction to strengthen instructional practices across educational settings.
- Offer weekly training sessions for region special education support staff to enhance their ability to coach classroom teachers in delivering effective English language arts/Math instruction.
- Host behavior symposiums for paraprofessionals.
- Facilitate a monthly new teacher training series offering professional development on various topics to improve teaching practices and student outcomes.

## **ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

- Expand Special Day Program and Resource Specialist Program (RSP) teacher collaborative meetings, focusing on the effective implementation of curriculum.
- Develop ongoing Learning Bursts for special educators, concentrating on delivering best practices in math and reading instruction.
- Design targeted training for paraprofessional to enhance their ability to support small group instruction.
- Increase the availability and diversity of training topics for general education teachers to strengthen their instructional practices in supporting neurodiverse learners.
- Collaborate with Division of Instruction partners to embed instructional best practices for students with disabilities in the 2025–2026 Banked Time professional development sessions.
- Expand behavior symposiums for paraprofessionals to include administrators and teachers.

## **MEASURE OF SUCCESS BY 2027**

Move students with disabilities, on average, closer to proficiency by 20 points in English Language Arts and 30 points in Math on the Smarter Balanced Assessment by 2027.

## **INCLUSIVE PRACTICES/LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

Educating students in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) supports their academic, social, and emotional growth. LRE ensures students with disabilities can participate in general education settings with peers, promoting inclusivity, diversity, and belonging to the maximum extent appropriate. This approach fosters essential skills like collaboration and empathy. LAUSD is committed to aligning with state and federal guidelines to increase the time students with disabilities spend in general education settings.

## **CURRENT PRACTICES**

- Provide coaching opportunities for general education teachers, modeling the implementation of instructional accommodations.
- Host an annual Inclusion Kickoff meeting to share resources and celebrate best practices in inclusive education.
- Offer a Micro-Credential program for general education teachers focused on best practices for teaching students with disabilities.
- Organize District-wide sessions to calibrate expectations for lead inclusion teachers at schools that have submitted an LRE Action Plan.
- Provide summer professional development choice sessions for general education teachers.
- Facilitate ongoing professional development opportunities throughout the year for teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and region support staff.

## **ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

- Conduct surveys and focus groups with teachers, parents, and students to gather detailed insights regarding the implementation of inclusive practices.
- Collaborate with the Division of Instruction to expand District-wide implementation of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Expand the Micro-Credential program for general education teachers to further enhance their support of students with disabilities.
- Partner with local universities and disability rights organizations to co-present to educational stakeholders.
- Facilitate the development of exemplar models of inclusive practices.
- Capture and promote stories from students, teachers, and parents about the impact of inclusion in their educational experiences.
- Collaborate with Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervention Services, Black Student Achievement Plan, Social Emotional Learning leads, and Educational Transformation Office to

align our efforts to disrupt disproportionality and use common language to discuss belonging at school.

- Expansion of inclusive Extended School Year (ESY) models.

### MEASURE OF SUCCESS BY 2027

Increase participation of students with disabilities in the general education setting to 80% of students for 80% or more of the day by June 2027.

## Pillar 2: Joy and Wellness

Welcoming  
Learning Environments

Whole-Child  
Well-Being

Strong Social-  
Emotional Skills

Outstanding  
Attendance

### EMERGENT THEMES

Information gathered on Joy and Wellness emphasized the positive impact of fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing social interactions, which contribute to students feeling valued as part of the school community. The provision of psychological services and mental health support for students with disabilities was also highlighted for its positive influence on student well-being.

Student involvement in their educational program and the IEP process was recognized as an effective strategy for enhancing self-advocacy skills. It was noted that increasing focus on developing self-advocacy opportunities could further empower students, promoting greater self-sufficiency and a stronger sense of ownership in their education.

### STUDENT VOICE AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Student voice and self-advocacy are key to an effective educational program. Empowering students to participate in decisions about their learning fosters ownership, responsibility, and motivation. Encouraging self-advocacy helps students express needs, set goals, and work with educators to personalize learning. This approach boosts academic success, confidence, and resilience, preparing students for future challenges.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

- Development of Student IEP Participation Toolkit for educators.
- Intentional Assistant Principal/Assistant Principal, Elementary Instructional Specialist, training that addresses best practices in student IEP participation.
- Monitoring of student participation in IEP team meetings.

### ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Train teachers on student engagement strategies focused on techniques for meaningfully engaging students in the planning and discussion of their educational programs.
- Engage families to understand the importance of student voice in shaping the IEP process, fostering stronger collaboration between home and school.
- Design visual materials showcasing student leadership in IEPs.
- Highlight and celebrate students for their self-advocacy and participation in the IEP process.

### MEASURES OF SUCCESS BY 2027

Increase student participation in the IEP process by 20% as measured by the "Names and Signatures" page of the IEP document by June 2027.



## Pillar 3: Engagement and Collaboration

Strong  
Relationships

Accessible  
Information

Leading for  
Impact

Honoring  
Perspectives

### EMERGENT THEMES

Information collected highlighted the importance of collaboration between schools, general education and special education teachers, and families. Respondents expressed that improved communication has contributed to more effective implementation of IEPs and better coordinated support for students.

There was also a desire to develop tools that would help families better navigate the special education system and access available resources. Additionally, feedback indicated a preference for sharing information through multiple platforms, including emails, phone calls, social media, and community events. Suggestions for further strengthening collaboration included forming partnerships with local organizations, holding regular collaborative meetings, establishing support groups for families to share experiences and seek emotional support, and offering workshops to guide families through the IEP process.

### ENHANCING PARENT ENGAGEMENT

Engaging parents and families is essential to fostering a collaborative environment. By listening to their insights and facilitating two-way communication, we empower families with the resources and learning opportunities needed to navigate the educational system and advocate effectively for their children. Building strong partnerships between parents and schools bridges communication gaps, ensuring parents are informed and actively involved in enhancing educational outcomes for all students.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

- The Division of Special Education website has been updated to enhance accessibility for parents and now includes a comprehensive list of family resources.
- Division of Special Education produces videos related to the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Plan and shares them with the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) as part of the yearly training catalog for CAC members.
- Biweekly collaborative meetings are held with the Office of Student, Family, and Community Engagement to plan, develop, and review parent engagement initiatives.
- Region Ambassadors offer a Special Education pathway that includes three annual learning sessions, culminating in regional certification.
- Virtual workshops on the Division of Special Education website are available to introduce special education services, provide information on inclusive practices, offer supports for students with dyslexia, and share strategies for integrating evidence-based play practices into the home environment for parents.
- Joint advocacy with CAC partners during Legislative Sharing Day in Sacramento.

### ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Coordinate an annual Special Education Parent and Family Resource Fair in each region.
- Foster partnerships with Family Resource Centers to share information and resources, enhancing the home-school connection.
- Encourage Parent Centers to organize “watch parties” during the Division of Special Education virtual parent workshops and Special Education Region Ambassador pathway sessions.
- Establish a dedicated section in the quarterly parent newsletter to highlight at least two (2) community-based resources aimed at supporting parent engagement.

- Conduct yearly Listen and Learn sessions in each region to engage families and the community to provide ongoing feedback
- Host “Coffee with Region Special Education Teams” events to facilitate connections, provide a platform for questions, and discuss important updates.
- Organize workshops for parents focused on strategies to support their child’s educational needs at home.
- Staff an informational table at regional family and community events to share information regarding special education services and programs.
- Survey families to determine topics of interest for additional ongoing parent information sessions.

### **MEASURE OF SUCCESS BY 2027**

All schools will display the yearly DSE Special Education Virtual Parent Workshops catalog in a visible location for families and staff by June 2027.

### **FOSTERING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Collaborating with community agencies to share available resources with students and families enriches the educational experience. These partnerships help to address the diverse needs of our students and families. Working together with agencies strengthens our collective ability to create a nurturing and supportive environment for students and families to thrive.

### **CURRENT PRACTICES**

- Collaborate with the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR); Supporting Innovative Practices (SIP); and Inclusion Matters, a local non-profit, to promote the provision of special education services in the LRE.
- Partner with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) to support opportunities for students through new Memorandums of Understanding with DOR Districts in the Los Angeles area.
- Implement Project SEARCH, a partnership involving LAUSD, five Kaiser Permanente hospitals, Children’s Hospital, Regional Centers, and job coaching agencies, to offer a one-year internship experience for students, preparing them for employment post-internship.
- Continue a long-standing partnership with the Los Angeles Community College District through the Center for Advanced Transition Skills (CATS), supporting students in taking courses at six colleges and engaging in paid work experience.
- Co-plan the Very Special Arts Festival in partnership with the Music Center to celebrate the intersection of the arts and disabilities.
- Participate as a member of the Dyslexia Working Group, collaborating with internal divisions, parents, and community members.

### **ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

- Convene regular meetings with Institutes of Higher Education to review district policies and practices, ensuring the enhancement of research-based strategies in district schools.
- Expand collaboration with CEEDAR, SIP, and Inclusion Matters to offer workshops for parents and staff focused on supporting students with disabilities in the LRE.
- Develop a partnership with Family Resource Centers to create additional communication channels and facilitate workshops that engage and support the community.
- Partner Intensive Diagnostic Education Centers (IDEC) with the UC/CSU Collaborative, National Center for Intensive Intervention, and UC Irvine to study practices within the centers and provide training to enhance service delivery.
- Collaborate with internal and external partners to recognize annual events that raise awareness about disabilities, including dyslexia, autism, cerebral palsy, Down Syndrome, and Inclusive Schools Week.
- Expand the partnership with the Division of Adult and Career Education (DACE), LAUSD Occupational Centers, and Children’s Hospital Los Angeles to provide training opportunities for students aged 18–22 at CTCs, enhancing their career prospects.

## **MEASURE OF SUCCESS BY 2027**

Co-facilitate at least one (1) DSE workshop each semester with a community-based organization to increase collaboration and parent outreach by June 2027.

## **ENSURING EQUITY IN COMMUNICATION**

Effective communication is crucial for building strong partnerships with the diverse families of students with disabilities. By providing written communication, parent workshops, and printed materials in the top languages spoken in our communities, we ensure that all families—regardless of their cultural or linguistic background—have equal access to important information about their child’s education, the IEP process, and support services.

### **CURRENT PRACTICES**

- New LAUSD website platform allows users to select preferred language for immediate access to information and resources.
- Multilingual support for publications, documents, videos, and communications to ensure accessibility for all families.
- Distribution of translated publications through various channels, such as sending them home with students, providing them at school sites, and offering downloadable, printer-friendly versions online.
- Professional translation services provided that specialize in educational materials to ensure accurate, culturally relevant translations.
- Collaboration with local community organizations, cultural centers, and parent advocacy groups to support both language assistance and the effective distribution of materials.
- Computer-generated translation of IEP documents enables participants to receive an instantly translated copy of the IEP, ensuring timely access to critical information.

### **ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

- Explore expanding available language options for recorded parent workshops.
- Integrate visual aids (infographics, charts, icons) in all presentations and publications to explain processes and key information, helping families who may have challenges with text-heavy documents or those who are visually impaired.
- Use AI-recorded videos to help families with limited English proficiency by standardizing voice, tone and accent in communications.
- Expanding computer generated translations to languages other than Spanish.

## **MEASURE OF SUCCESS BY 2027**

The three most frequently used publications will be available in the top nine (9) languages, other than English and Spanish, spoken in our community, ensuring that families of students with disabilities have equal access to important information, including the IEP process, support services, and educational resources by June 2027.

## **DEMYSTIFYING THE IEP PROCESS**

Demystifying the special education process helps families feel informed, empowered, and confident in advocating for their child’s needs. By clarifying steps, roles, and expectations, families can make informed decisions and actively participate in the IEP process. This transparency fosters trust, reduces anxiety, and promotes collaboration, leading to better educational outcomes for students with disabilities.

### **CURRENT PRACTICES**

- Highlight resources and tools on the Division of Special Education website to support families in navigating the IEP process effectively.
- Provide educator training to enhance their skills in engaging parents as partners throughout the IEP process.

- Enhance staff capacity to address and resolve parent concerns during the IEP process.
- Updated the “IEP and You” and “The ITP and You” to include more visuals and stakeholder-friendly language for better accessibility and engagement.
- Host informational parent workshop sessions that guides families through the LAUSD IEP document, offering tips on key information to review in preparation for an IEP team meeting.
- Include the “Empowering Families During the IEP Process: An Introduction to Special Education” presentation on Division of Special Education website.

### ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

- Develop a video module for parents entering the initial assessment stage outlining the purpose of special education, the IEP process, and procedural rights and safeguards.
- Collaborate with the Office of Student Civil Rights to produce a video module for families that highlights key aspects of Section 504 and IEPs.
- Collaborate with Family Resource Centers to actively engage families as partners in the educational process.
- Provide an informational overview to Parent Center representatives on the IEP process and the supports available to parents.
- Presentation of the “Empowering Families During the IEP Process: An Introduction to Special Education” at individual school sites twice per school year by a school administrator responsible for monitoring special education services.

### MEASURES OF SUCCESS BY 2027

School sites will present “Empowering Families During the IEP Process: An Introduction to Special Education” to families twice per school year by June 2027.

## Pillar 4: Operational Effectiveness

Data-Driven  
Decision-Making

Modernizing  
Infrastructure

Sustainable  
Budgeting

District  
of Choice

### EMERGENT THEMES

Emerging themes in data-driven decision-making for special education emphasize the critical role of accurate and timely data in improving student outcomes. Participants highlight the need for robust data systems to track student progress, monitor service implementation, and inform instructional strategies. There is a strong focus on using data to identify gaps in services and adjust practices to better meet students' needs. However, challenges such as data inconsistencies and the need for staff training in data interpretation are also noted.

### DATA-INFORMED DECISION MAKING

Data-informed decisions are crucial in special education to ensure strategies and interventions are tailored to each student's unique needs. By analyzing student progress, educators can identify trends, assess program effectiveness, and make informed adjustments to improve outcomes. Data empowers teams to make timely, targeted, evidence-based decisions, maximizing success and ensuring compliance with federal, state, and district mandates.

### CURRENT PRACTICES

- Engage central and region special education teams in regularly scheduled data discussions to review and analyze key data metrics.
- Regularly distribute compliance data to region leadership and special education teams to ensure the intentional provision of targeted interventions and tiered supports.
- Training for school site special education administrators to ensure compliance with federal, state, and district requirements.



- Monthly data office hours hosted by the DSE data team for region special education teams.
- Ongoing maintenance and enhancing of reports and features of the IEP management system to comply with legal requirements and school site needs.
- Use data trends to design professional development that targets specific needs, improves instructional practices, and enhances student outcomes.

### **ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

- Highlight schools who consistently meet or exceed compliance standards.
- Continue to deliver a comprehensive ESY program to support eligible students in maintaining academic progress.

### **MEASURES OF SUCCESS BY 2027**

Facilitate three (3) formal data discussions annually with central and region special education teams to analyze data and inform practice by June 2027.

## **Pillar 5: Investing in Staff**

Diverse  
Workforce

Professional  
Learning

Staff  
Wellness

High Performance  
Standards

### **EMERGENT THEMES**

While respondents acknowledged the dedication and commitment of existing staff members in supporting students with disabilities, they also highlighted the impact that staffing shortages have on delivering a meaningful educational program. Respondents emphasized that, as additional staff are hired, it is essential to provide comprehensive training programs to enhance their ability to meet the unique needs of the students they serve. Furthermore, additional training for general education teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators was also identified as a critical need.

### **EDUCATOR GROWTH**

Providing growth opportunities for educators is essential to supporting students with diverse learning needs. Ongoing professional development keeps educators informed about current, research-based strategies to address disabilities and learning challenges. This investment enables educators to create inclusive, personalized learning experiences, improving outcomes for students and promoting an equitable environment.

### **CURRENT STRATEGIES**

- Provide ongoing, specialized training and coaching support for educators on research-based strategies to enhance instructional and behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Partner with Human Resources to offer a 5-day New Special Education Teaching Academy for incoming educators.
- Hold regular meetings with curriculum partners to assess the needs and establish training priorities for Special Educators, utilizing District tools.
- Foster strong and consistent collaboration with the Multilingual Multicultural Education Department and the Division of Instruction to cross-promote training opportunities and ensure the needs of students with disabilities are incorporated into the development of district initiatives.
- Training modules for general education teachers to enhance their ability to support students within the general education setting.
- Implementation of Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles by administrators to support educators with continuous improvement of student outcomes.

## **ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

- Develop additional specialized training for educators in program-specific roles (e.g., administrators, Resource Specialists, Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing) to improve academic and behavioral outcomes for students with disabilities.
- Expand training opportunities for general education teachers to better support students in inclusive general education environments.
- Offer comprehensive onboarding and sustained professional development for paraeducators, focusing on their unique responsibilities in supporting students.
- Strengthen and deepen collaboration with the Intern, Credentialing, and Added Authorization Program to ensure new special education teachers receive training aligned with Division of Special Education objectives.
- Provide training for administrators supporting special education and special education support staff on the effective use of classroom instructional strategies outlined in the "Division of Special Education Classroom Look Fors" document and the provision of related actionable feedback.

## **MEASURES OF SUCCESS BY 2027**

90% of classroom visits conducted by region special education staff will demonstrate evidence of the instructional strategies outlined on the "Division of Special Education Classroom Look Fors" document as evidenced by the DSE School Support Form by June 2027.

## **GROWING AND RETAINING OUR WORKFORCE**

Building a strong, sustainable educational workforce is key to ensuring all students receive a high-quality education. A dedicated team of teachers, support staff, and specialists fosters student engagement, provides personalized support, and meets diverse learning needs. Investing in recruitment, professional development, and retention strategies helps attract and retain a workforce that can address today's classroom challenges.

## **CURRENT PRACTICES**

- Collaborate with institutes of higher education, Human Resources, and the Personnel Commission to develop strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining special education and deaf education professionals.
- Create structured pathways for the placement of university interns and student teachers to enhance the preparation of future educators.
- Actively engage in job fairs and recruitment efforts to identify and attract new staff.

## **ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN**

- Explore the development of a Career and Technical Education pathway to encourage high school seniors to pursue careers in special education and deaf education.
- Expand partnerships between Division of Special Education and Division of Adult and Career Education for Career and Transition Centers, District Office of Transition Services, and Occupational Centers.
- Strengthen collaboration with the Intern, Credentialing, and Added Authorization Program to better align the training of new LAUSD teachers with the initiatives and priorities of the Division of Special Education.

## **MEASURES OF SUCCESS BY 2027**

The Division of Special Education will actively participate in 90% of all LAUSD recruitment events to support the hiring and retention of qualified special education professionals by June 2027.

## CONCLUSION

As we conclude the Division of Special Education's Listen and Learn Campaign, we are proud to share that we identified key emergent themes, outlined existing supports, and developed targeted action steps grounded in stakeholder input. For each area of focus, we established clear measures of success to ensure transparency and accountability throughout implementation. Stakeholder feedback was essential in shaping our direction and informed every step of our decision-making process.

Looking ahead, the Division remains committed to continuing this cycle of active listening and engagement through future Listen and Learn Campaigns. These upcoming efforts will build upon the foundation we have laid, allowing us to gather fresh insights, revisit ongoing priorities, and identify new areas of opportunity. By establishing Listen and Learn as a recurring practice, we aim to create a sustained culture of responsiveness, reflection, and collaboration with our school communities. Stakeholder input will remain central to our process, ensuring that the voices of students, families, educators, and staff guide our continuous improvement and innovation in special education.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all focus group and survey participants—your voices were instrumental in this work and will continue to drive our efforts in preparing students to be **READY FOR THE WORLD**.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Division of Special Education, I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the stakeholders who participated in our Listen and Learn Campaign focus groups and/or completing the survey. Your voices, insights, and experiences are invaluable in shaping the future of special education in LAUSD.

A special thank you to our parents, educational partners, and region teams for their dedication and collaboration throughout this process. Your commitment to our students and their success is truly inspiring. I also want to express my deep appreciation to the leadership in Region East, Region North, Region South, Region West, and Region XS for their support in making this initiative a success.

Additionally, I want to recognize and thank the Division of Special Education Team for their dedication and hard work in bringing this vision to life. Their support has been instrumental in developing this final report, which will guide our next steps in strengthening support for our students.

Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive community for our students. We look forward to continuing this work alongside you as we turn feedback into action.

With gratitude,

Jose Soto  
Executive Director, Special Education

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERTS

The LAUSD Division of Special Education is fortunate to collaborate with educational partners who bring a wealth of experience. The contributions of Kristin Wright, Victoria Graf, and Chuck Flores to this campaign provide valuable insights into special education practices across the state and beyond. Their expertise in the field of special education helps shape next steps, enhancing opportunities for students with disabilities and ensuring meaningful learning experiences for all.



Kristin Wright is the Executive Director of Equity, Diversity, Prevention, Early Intervention, and Title IX at the Sacramento County Office of Education. She joined Sacramento County in 2020 after serving as California's State Director of Special Education at the California Department of Education (CDE). Prior to her work at CDE, Wright was an Education Policy Advisor for Special Education, Homeless, and Foster Youth at the California State Board of Education and a legislative staff member at the California State Assembly. Her experience also includes serving as Assistant Director at Volunteers of America, where she worked with homeless programs in Sacramento County. Wright holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology, a Special Education Teaching Credential, and a Master's degree in Special Education.





Victoria L. Graf, Ph.D., Professor Emerita, is the former Academic Program Director for Special Education at Loyola Marymount University, where she spent over 40 years preparing educators and advocating for inclusive education. A Past-President of CAPSE/TED, she currently serves as Vice Chair of the California Advisory Commission on Special Education. Dr. Graf has contributed to numerous state task forces, including co-chairing the Education Preparation and Professional Learning Subcommittee of the California Statewide Special Education Task Force. She also serves on school boards and engages in international inclusion projects in South Sudan, South Africa, Ireland, and Northern Ireland, focusing on marginalized children, especially girls and those with disabilities.



Dr. Chuck Flores has been an educator for over forty years. He has served as a Teacher, Bilingual Coordinator, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal, Principal, and Coordinator of Operations for the Los Angeles Unified School District; and was the Director of High Schools, Principal Leadership and Support, with the San Francisco Unified School District. A graduate of the Rossier School of Education, Dr. Flores earned his Ed.D. in K-12 Leadership in Urban School Settings. Dr. Flores also has a Bachelor's Degree in Chicano Studies from California State University, Northridge; a Master's Degree in American Studies from Pepperdine University; and a Master's Degree in Educational Administration from California State University, Northridge. Currently, Dr. Flores is an Associate Professor with the College of Education at Cal State LA, and the Program Coordinator for the Educational Administration Program.



## RESOURCES

- [Division of Special Education Website](https://sped.lausd.org)  
<https://sped.lausd.org>
- [Position Paper – Equity and Access for Students with Disabilities](https://media.edlio.net/47280ab3/3347b876/618edfe4/39292de541f64afc9da8902cf2367c4f?_Position%20Paper%20Equity%20and%20Access%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities-_11_19_2021_2_1_2022.pdf)  
[https://media.edlio.net/47280ab3/3347b876/618edfe4/39292de541f64afc9da8902cf2367c4f?\\_Position%20Paper%20Equity%20and%20Access%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities-\\_11\\_19\\_2021\\_2\\_1\\_2022.pdf](https://media.edlio.net/47280ab3/3347b876/618edfe4/39292de541f64afc9da8902cf2367c4f?_Position%20Paper%20Equity%20and%20Access%20for%20Students%20with%20Disabilities-_11_19_2021_2_1_2022.pdf)
- [DSE TK-12 Instruction Parent/Guardian Resources](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u9MyTF3VoIGOljy-E_3tVUHVsw9wAVGt6HCGalOBUmK/edit?usp=sharing)  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u9MyTF3VoIGOljy-E\\_3tVUHVsw9wAVGt6HCGalOBUmK/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u9MyTF3VoIGOljy-E_3tVUHVsw9wAVGt6HCGalOBUmK/edit?usp=sharing)
- [Inclusive Practices in LAUSD Website](https://sped.lausd.org/inclusion)  
<https://sped.lausd.org/inclusion>
- [Office of Student, Family and Community Engagement Website](https://families.lausd.org/)  
<https://families.lausd.org/>
- [California Department of Education](https://www.cde.ca.gov)  
<https://www.cde.ca.gov>
- [Department of Developmental Services \(DDS\)](https://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/)  
<https://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/>
- [Listing of Regional Centers](https://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/lookup-rcs-by-county/)  
<https://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/lookup-rcs-by-county/>
- [Los Angeles County California Children’s Services \(CCS\)](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/cms/ccs.htm)  
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/cms/ccs.htm>
- [Department of Rehabilitation \(DOR\)](https://www.dor.ca.gov/)  
<https://www.dor.ca.gov/>
- [LAUSD Human Resources Division](https://www.lausd.org/hr)  
<https://www.lausd.org/hr>
- [LAUSD Personnel Commission](https://www.lausd.org/pc)  
<https://www.lausd.org/pc>





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Division of Special Education

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