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# Division of Special Education **Listen and Learn Campaign**

**Presented by Jose Soto,  
Alesha Haase and Kristin Lambert**

May 7, 2025



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**Division of Special Education**

## **Listen and Learn Campaign**

Summary and Action Steps, Spring 2025



# Vision, Mission, Core Beliefs

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

**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.

# Guided by LAUSD Pillars and Priorities

## Division of Special Education Priorities

**Instruction**

**Operations**

**Substantial Compliance**

**Engagement / Communication**

## Connections to LAUSD Pillars

**Pillar 1: Academic Excellence**

**Pillar 2: Joy and Wellness**

**Pillar 4: Operational Effectiveness**

**Pillar 5: Investing in Staff**

**Pillar 4: Operational Effectiveness**

**Pillar 3: Engagement and Collaboration**

# Listening to the Community

**Purpose** Gather feedback from students, families, educators, and community partners to inform special education in LAUSD.

**Method** Mixed-methods – 31 focus groups + over 1,200 survey responses.

**Vision** Ensure all students with disabilities receive a high-quality education.

# Listen and Learn Process

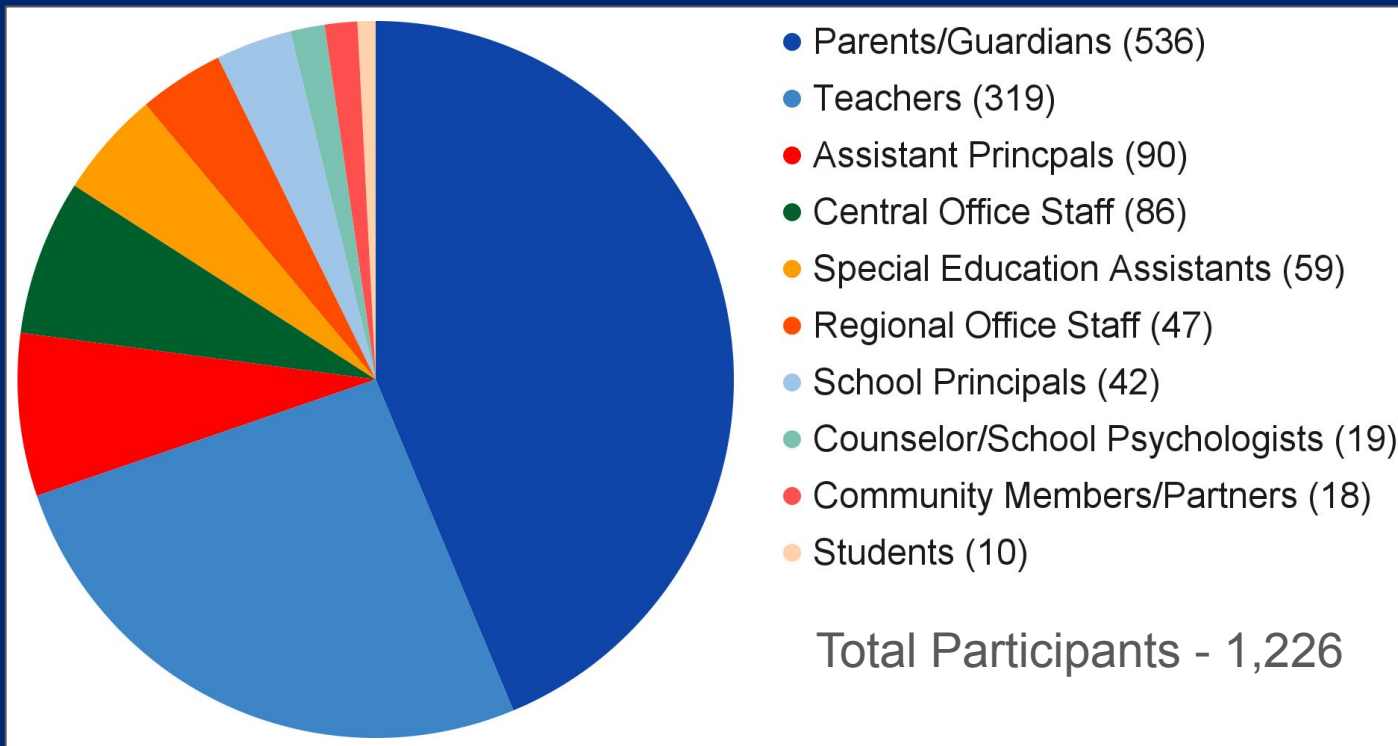


# Focus Group Participants

31 Focus Group Sessions Held Across the District. Focus group sessions were comprised of:

- Parents
- Educational Partners (Regional Centers, CAC, SPED Committee, Charter School Executive Board, Deaf Education Committee)
- Assistants
- Teachers
- Assistant Principals, EIS
- Principals
- Regional Leadership

# Survey Participants



# Professional Expert Collaboration



**Kristin Wright**

Executive Director of Equity,  
Diversity, Prevention, Early  
Intervention, and Title IX,  
Sacramento County Office of  
Education; Former CA State  
Director of Special Education



**Victoria Graf, Ph.D.**

Former Academic Program  
Director for Special  
Education at Loyola  
Marymount University



**Chuck Flores, Ed.D.**

Associate Professor, Cal  
State LA; Program  
Coordinator for the  
Educational Administration  
Program.





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Findings and Next Steps for Pillars 1 and 2

# Academic Excellence Joy and Wellness

Presented by Alesha Haase

# Pillar 1: Academic Excellence

## Emergent Themes

Respondents shared:

- The variety of program options and digital tools improve access
- Inclusive classroom opportunities are growing for students
- Instructional consistency and additional training to address behavioral difficulty is needed



# Pillar 1: Academic Excellence

## HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION

### Current Practices

- Development of Special Education **Classroom Look-Fors**
- Creation of a Division of Special Education **Instructional Resource Guide**
- Implementation of a **structured literacy aligned reading intervention**
- Introduction of a **Diploma with the Alternate Assessment Exemption**
- **Professional development** for teachers, paraprofessionals

### Actions to be Taken

- **Expand trainings** for teachers and paraprofessionals
- Increase availability & topics of **trainings for general education teachers**
- Collaborate with Division of Instruction partners to embed instructional best practices for students with disabilities in the **2025-2026 Banked Time** professional development sessions
- Expansion of **behavior symposiums** for paraeducators to include administrators and teachers

# Pillar 1: Academic Excellence

## INCLUSIVE PRACTICES/LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

### Current Practices

- **Micro-Credential** program for general education teachers
- Organize District-wide sessions for lead inclusion teachers
- Provide **summer professional development** choice sessions for general education teachers
- Facilitate ongoing **professional development** opportunities for teachers and parents

### Actions to be Taken

- Conduct surveys and **focus groups**
- Expand District-wide implementation of **Universal Design for Learning**.
- **Expand Micro-Credential** program
- Co-present to educational stakeholders with partners
- Development of inclusive **model classrooms**
- Expansion of **inclusive Extended School Year (ESY)** models.

# Pillar 2: Joy and Wellness

## Emergent Themes

Respondents shared:

- Students feel greater belonging in inclusive environments
- Wellness supports like psychological services are helpful
- Student self-advocacy in the IEP process can be improved



# Pillar 2: Joy and Wellness

## STUDENT VOICE AND SELF-ADVOCACY

### Current Practices

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

### Actions to be Taken

- Train teachers on **student engagement** strategies
- Engage families to share the importance of **student voice** in shaping the IEP process
- Highlight and celebrate students for their **self-advocacy** and participation in the IEP process

# Guiding Questions

- What types of investments and student support are needed to create an equitable inclusive classroom environment?
- What does it look like when student voice is a significant part of the IEP process?





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# Findings and Next Steps for Pillars 3

## Engagement and Collaboration

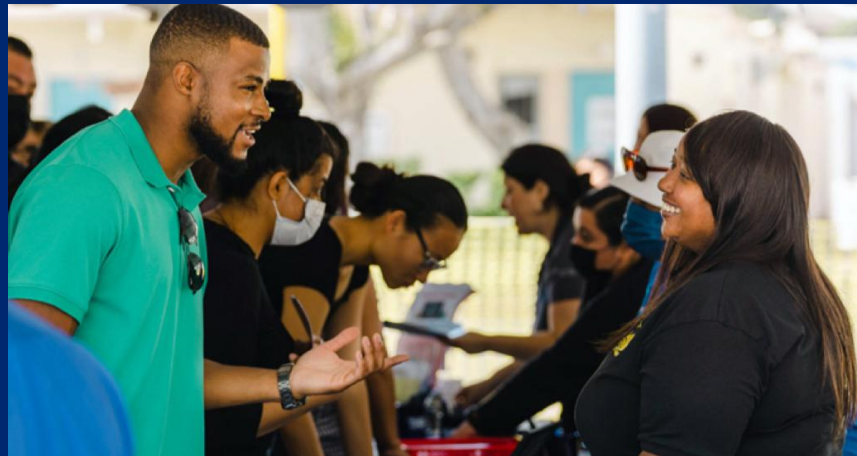


# Pillar 3: Engagement and Collaboration

## Emergent Themes

Respondents shared:

- Parent engagement is increasing through Ambassadors and workshops
- Community partnerships are growing to support families
- Families need more accessible, clear information



# Pillar 3: Engagement and Collaboration

## ENHANCING PARENT ENGAGEMENT

### Current Practices

- Website updated, includes a comprehensive list of family resources
- Special Education Local Plan Area Plan **videos** for Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
- **Collaborative meetings** with the Office of Student, Family, and Community Engagement
- **Region Ambassadors** that includes three annual learning sessions
- **Virtual workshops** are available on the website

### Actions to be Taken

- Special Education Parent and Family **Resource Fairs**
- Parent Center “**watch parties**” during parent workshops
- Engage families in Regional Listen and Learn, “**Coffee with Regional Special Education Teams**” and through surveys
- Organize **workshops** for parents focused on strategies to support their child’s educational needs at home

# Pillar 3: Engagement and Collaboration

## FOSTERING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Current Practices

- Collaborate with partners to promote service delivery in the LRE
- Partner with the **Department of Rehabilitation** (DOR)
- **Project SEARCH** at hospitals
- Center for **Advanced Transition Skills** at LACCD campuses
- **Very Special Arts Festival** in partnership with the Music Center
- Dyslexia Working Group

### Actions to be Taken

- Meetings with **Institutes of Higher Education**
- Workshops for parents and staff focused on supporting students with disabilities in the LRE
- Annual events that raise awareness about disabilities
- Expand the partnership with the **Division of Adult and Career Education**

# Pillar 3: Engagement and Collaboration

## ENSURING EQUITY IN COMMUNICATION

### Current Practices

- Website platform allows users to select **preferred language**
- **Multilingual support** for publications, documents, videos, and communications
- Collaboration with local community organizations to support both language assistance and the effective distribution of materials
- **Computer-generated translation** of IEP documents provide instantly translated copy of the IEP

### Actions to be Taken

- Explore expanding available language options for recorded parent workshops
- **Integrate visual aids** in all presentations and publications
- Use **AI-recorded videos**
- **Expanding computer generated translations** to languages other than Spanish

# Pillar 3: Engagement and Collaboration

## DEMYSTIFYING THE IEP PROCESS

### Current Practices

- Resources and tools on website
- Enhance ability to address and resolve parent concerns during IEP process
- Updated the **“IEP and You”** and **“The ITP and You”**
- Informational **parent workshop sessions** that guides families through the LAUSD IEP document
- “Empowering Families During the IEP Process: An Introduction to Special Education” presentation on Division of Special Education website

### Actions to be Taken

- Develop **video module** for parents entering the initial assessment stage
- Produce video module about key aspects of Section 504 and IEPs
- Overview of IEP process and the supports available to Parent Center representatives
- **Special Education presentations** at individual school sites twice per school year by a school administrator

# Guiding Questions

- What type of external partnerships could resource gaps in our school communities?
- What are some topics and activities that would make parent workshops more meaningful and relevant?



Findings and Next Steps for Pillars 4 and 5

# Operational Effectiveness

## Investing in Staff

Presented by Kristin Lambert

# Pillar 4: Operational Effectiveness

## Emergent Themes

Respondents shared:

- Accurate and timely data is helpful in improving student outcomes
- There is a strong focus on using data to adjust practices to better meet students' needs
- Additional training on data use is needed





# Pillar 4: Operational Effectiveness

## DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

### Current Practices

- Regularly scheduled data discussions
- Distribute compliance **data** to regional leadership & special education teams
- School site administrator training to ensure compliance with federal, state, and district requirements
- Monthly data **office hours** hosted by the DSE data team
- Use **data trends** to design professional development

### 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

# Pillar 5: Investing in Staff

## Emergent Themes

Respondents shared:

- New teacher academies offer strong onboarding
- PD opportunities are increasing across roles
- Staffing shortages and paraeducator training remain areas of need



# Pillar 5: Investing in Staff

## EDUCATOR GROWTH

### Current Practices

- Provide **training and coaching** on research-based strategies
- Partner with **Human Resources** to offer a 5-day New Special Education Teaching Academy
- Hold regular meetings with curriculum partners
- Foster strong and consistent collaboration with the **Multilingual Multicultural Education Department** and the **Division of Instruction**

### Actions to be Taken

- Develop additional specialized training for educators in program-specific roles
- Expand **training opportunities** for general education teachers to support students in inclusive general education environments
- Offer comprehensive onboarding and sustained **professional development for paraeducators**

# Pillar 5: Investing in Staff

## GROWING AND RETAINING OUR WORKFORCE

### Current Practices

- Collaborate with institutes of **higher education** to develop strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining special education and deaf education professionals
- Create pathways for the **placement of university interns** and student teachers
- Actively engage in job fairs and **recruitment** efforts

### Actions to be Taken

- Explore the development of a **Career and Technical Education** pathway for careers in **special education** and **deaf education**
- Expand partnerships between internal LAUSD departments
- Strengthen collaboration with the Intern, Credentialing, and **Added Authorization Program**

# Guiding Questions

- What types of professional development topics are needed to better support paraeducators and/or special education teachers?
- How can we create accessible career pathway opportunities for special education educators?

# Coming Soon



The Division of Special Education will be publishing the Listen and Learn Campaign Booklet soon in both hardcopy and digital formats.