

Summary Report of Comments from Community Advisory Committee Members on the Revised LAUSD Local Plan for Special Education, 2016

LAUSD's Community Advisory Committee appreciates this opportunity to comment on the proposed revisions for the Special Education Local Plan. The sections reviewed by the CAC include:

- Governance and Administration of the Plan
- Regionalized Services;
- Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Public Participation
- Early Childhood Special Education Program
- Literacy
- Behavior Support
- Psychological Services Educationally Related Intensive Counseling Services (ERICS)

These sections were presented to the CAC on April 13, 2016, with 30 days allotted for CAC members to provide comment. This is a summarized report of the comments submitted to the CAC Chair within this timeframe.

Section V: Governance and Administration of the Plan

No comments.

Section VI: Regionalized Services

Some communities in our region lack resources, especially when compared to other communities. It is helpful to hear that staff provide assistance to impacted families with resources or referrals to help them access needed services, regardless of regional disparities.

In addition to partnerships with institutions of higher education (IHE) to train student teachers, I would like to see partnerships with institutions of higher education to be more in depth - for example, university support to evaluate and research practices for continued program improvement for both institutions, and support in the design of professional development on evidence-based practices from faculty from local IHEs.

Section VII: Community Advisory Committee

A recommendation was made for more and continuous updates to CAC members. More can be done to ensure CAC input into the annual priorities of the Local Plan and the provision of special education services within LAUSD.

Another recommendation is that it should be an expectation that CAC membership include representation from a local Institute of Higher Education. (The CAC currently has such a member, but it is not expected or required.)

Section VIII: Public Participation

In section G-1, a request was made to change the existing language to “up to” eight of the 24.

Section IX: Early Childhood Special Education Program

No comments.

Section XI: Literacy

General education teachers require training about learning disability issues. Those at-risk students who have not been assessed for Special Education services may struggle due to learning disabilities that have not been identified.

Another CAC member noted that intervention is not a gradable subject and conflicts with other academic opportunities. Reconsider the provision of intervention when this conflicts with a student’s ability to access other instruction; consider making intervention a gradable subject.

Another CAC member stated that “literacy intervention programs driven by data” are important, not just for students in Special Education taught by RSP teachers, but also while students are being assessed for Special Education. Schools must provide intervention services to all students who qualify, but schools have lots of leeway in deciding what model to use and how intervention is offered. Some schools offer intervention after school hours, paying general education classroom teachers stipends to stay after school; not all students can access this. When schools offer a hodgepodge of intervention services that are not data-driven, students, some of whom may eventually be identified for Special Education services, are at risk of falling further behind. Intervention should be seen on a continuum, bridging general education and Special Education, and should consistently be a high-quality, evidence-based program offered at times when a majority of students can benefit.

Finally, a recommendation was made that the District offer more in-service professional development training on proper interventions, including Tiers I-III.

Section XIII: Behavior Support

One CAC member observed that “Behavior Support” conflicts with Positive Behavior Intensive Support and Restorative Justice. Positive behavior is currently being advocated in operations successfully. Special education behavior support is not as successful, in this member’s opinion. So this recommendation would be to better align the Behavior Support being provided through Special Education with the data available from Discipline Foundation/Positive Behavior Intensive Support policies.

Another CAC member requests that LAUSD increase behavioral training for general education teachers. Functional Behavior Assessments completed by the Resource Specialist Teacher (RSP) need to either be completed by District personnel or the District should fund substitutes to provide more time for the RSP to complete these assessments.

Also, upon examining Section A., “Behavioral Intervention Prohibited by Law,” another CAC member asks what the consequences are or the procedures followed when staff deny a child access to bathroom facilities (Number 3) or leave a child without adequate supervision (Number 7)?

Section XIV: Psychological Services Educationally Related Intensive Counseling Services (ERICS)

It was noted that including timelines in this section would provide greater transparency to parents and other stakeholders studying this policy. This section states that resources and services be provided in a “timely manner” — but timeliness is subjective. The recommendation is to include specific timelines in order to expedite mandated services in a way that is clearly defined for families and stakeholders.

Another CAC member noted that the expectation should be that once the IEP is finalized, services should start within the week.

Additional Comments (indirectly related to the Local Plan Revision sections)

To facilitate participation by teacher representatives on the CAC, the District should send a release for teachers in advance to their respective school sites, to ensure classroom teacher participation on the CAC. The release should indicate how the substitute teacher covering the classroom will be paid for. A teacher member has been written up for attending a regularly scheduled CAC meeting; this was only dropped after UTLA intervened.

Also: it appears that structures for special education and general education administration remain very separate, despite a mandate for Least Restrictive Environment and new recommendations for increased overlapping in structures by the CTC.

LAUSD Administrators (Office of Government Relations) should advocate for legislative changes to mandate that a parent or guardian must participate in each child's IEP meetings by law.

Parent, Community Student Services needs resources to support further engagement efforts for parity.

Continue publishing the CAC newsletter and use this as a vehicle for outreach and also to inform the community about topics related to the SELPA Local Plan review with continuous and annual updates.

Following a presentation from UCLA on the POPE and SMART programs for students with autism, one member wondered if LAUSD's SELPA supports these programs? (Since these programs take place on LAUSD school sites and this would fall under Regionalized Services, the answer is Yes."

- Partnerships and cooperation with institutes of higher education to provide training of personnel and development of innovative programs.)

A member asked why signing comments to the Local Plan is optional? (Because anonymity encourages people to state what they really think without repercussions.)

Finally, a member expressed the importance of ensuring uniformity vs. equality and mandated compliance when it comes to the SELPA Local Plan review. This member would like to see ongoing recommendations elicited from the CAC and community stakeholders in an ongoing dialogue, rather than just as an annual occurrence. They would also like to see more data made available to the CAC regarding the quality of services provided to students. This member is concerned that:

- services be provided to students in a timely manner;
- students have access to all required curriculum, instructional materials, services and resources;
- there is a shortage of qualified teachers; and
- the move toward greater integration should be encouraged, so long as the appropriate placement of students remains the priority.

This report is respectfully submitted by Kathy Kantner, CAC Chairperson, May 13, 2016.