



January 9, 2017

Dear PAUSD Board Members, Superintendent McGee and Dr. Castellon,

The Palo Alto Community Advisory Committee for Special Education (Palo Alto CAC) has not yet provided input on the PAUSD Equity Plan. However as recommended in the November 2016 review of Special Education by Thomas Hehir and Associates, we do agree that including students with disabilities in equitable education is necessary and complementary to the MADT. We are proponents of “providing early intervention and careful monitoring using a valid measure” and “specifically targeted materials and strategies that have proven effective”. We also wish to express our concerns for students who are Historically Underrepresented (HUR) and those with behavioral or learning challenges who are harmed by prejudices and beliefs resulting from lowered academic expectations or biased behavioral standards.

The Palo Alto CAC has served families since 1988, and we have long been promoting equity and outreach as part of our core efforts, including:

- initiation and promotion of districtwide Unity Day, Inclusive Schools Week and Abilities Awareness programs,
- coordination of Inclusive Extracurricular Activities/Resource Fairs for special needs and low-income families,
- parent education workshops with translation and accommodations for working parents and in East Palo Alto,
- translation and distribution of communications into primary languages and via preferred modalities (including paper flyers/brochures/calendars), and
- long-standing relationships with affinity groups, parent/student advocates and community partners.

We will continue working with the district and parents, advocating for equitable opportunities and access for HUR and students with disabilities and differences. We intend to offer input to the district’s 2017/18 Equity Plan Addendum, including a focus on:

1. communicating effectively with HUR families via preferred language and modality,
2. training staff and accounting for any unconscious bias,
3. empowering parents and students through education and engagement, and
4. tracking and screening student progress with valid data measures

Sincerely,

Kimberly Eng Lee, Christina Schmidt, and Michelle Higgins
On behalf of the Palo Alto Community Advisory Committee for Special Education