



Statement at PAUSD School Board Meeting RE: Proposed Equity Plan (Dec. 17, 2017)

The mission of the Palo Alto CAC is to advocate for equity -- inclusive and fair schooling for students with learning differences and disabilities. We thank Keith Wheeler and Judy Argumedo for their work.

[This Plan](#) is a roadmap that aligns with mandates under [ESSA](#) ("Every Students Succeeds Act") to "provide ALL children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close...achievement gaps." The Plan integrates federal and state LAW with a local plan of action, and measurable goals for four disadvantaged groups: students in low-economic households, minorities, students in special education and those with limited language.

By providing transparency about how these students are faring, we can apply critical interventions to help them succeed, like so many others in our district enjoy.

"A rising tide lifts ALL ships." We anticipate that including Special Ed students increases high-quality practices for students of all ethnicities and socio-economics. Improved data reporting sheds light on a SOLUTION, in key areas like access to advanced classes, discipline rates, graduation and chronic absenteeism. We recommend a keen eye on student data by disability, ethnicity, socio-economics and age of identification. For example:

- 1 in 5 people have learning and attention issues like dyslexia & ADHD. These kids are smart and can achieve like their peers, but without early or effective help it can be a downward spiral
- [PAUSD identifies](#) 82% of Special Ed students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) at 10-17 year olds (between fourth and eleventh grade), too late for some to access content. We identify SLD in 60% of Special Ed students of color.
- the [Dashboard](#) revealed alarming declines for HUR and Special Ed students in graduation and college preparedness, and increases in suspension and absenteeism

We strongly recommend following new [CDE guidelines](#) calling for universal dyslexia screening starting kindergarten, and Structured Literacy as early as kindergarten to help close the gap. Many factors result in disengagement and dysfunction, PAUSD must build capacity to understand the whole child. **We support hiring more elementary school behaviorists.**

This Plan illustrates key building blocks for an equity-focused system — setting high expectations for all students, and goals for the groups who are the furthest behind. Bravo.