



Statement to the PAUSD School Board & Interim Superintendent Karen Hendricks (May 22, 2018)

Today we finally have our own **publicly accountable, systematic review** of Special Education and their continued promise to: focus on student outcomes, increase capacity, support staff collaboration and co-planning, and engage parents. Their recommendations align with LCAP and the Palo Alto CAC thanks all staff members for responding constructively to the surveys and focus groups.

What this Review shows us (consistent with all the other paid external consults) is that immediate and significant action must be taken so IEPs are implemented with fidelity.

1. Echoing the 2016 Special Ed Review, is the clear request by staff for **increased training on how to support students with disabilities**. In the Superintendent Search Survey, 74% of teachers reported they “personalize instructional strategies to address individual learning needs” while only 39% of all respondents (including students, administrators, parents) agree. So our teachers are doing all they know. General Ed teachers receive almost no education about disabilities for their credentialing. Professional development is a must, but here is the problem: Teachers can’t simultaneously say they need more training, while having contractual limits on how much they get. The Review recommends hiring coaches, behaviorists and inclusion specialists for embedded, in-situ professional learning. Teaching teachers increases the effectiveness of their instruction, reduces student and teacher distress, out-of-district placements, and expensive disputes. **It takes training and a mind-shift for ALL educators to include and instruct ALL kids.**
2. Special Education by definition is about services that ensure students receive educational benefit. The recommendations are for **Special Ed staffing increases to ensure proper instruction happens**. Non-compliance has legal repercussions, but more importantly, non-compliance jeopardizes student outcomes, and pits parents against teachers. 15% of parents reported never receiving updates on IEP goals, how then can they engage? **There is NO capacity in the current system for improvement and compliance.**

How to proceed from here? This self-study re-confirms issues that are not new. Their Quality Assurance Program is the benchmark to build an improvement plan against. CAC stands ready to help, with particular concern for our secondary schools. 90% of staff report all students benefit from co-teaching. Yet, these practices aren’t assessed or documented in IEPs, and confusion remains around the quality and future of the co-teaching program.

As a Board and an Administrative Cabinet, you have said that Special Education and Equity are priorities. So when and how are you taking action? We, the parents ARE STILL WAITING.