



## Comments to the Board of Education on [Virtual Learning](#) and [Literacy](#) 3/23/21

*Delivered by Kimberly Eng Lee, co-Chair Palo Alto CAC*

We are pleased to see [these results](#), and the clear acknowledgement of the impact that Structured Literacy has on improving outcomes for struggling readers. We hope staff will clarify the sample size, since the data shown doesn't give the number of students who received intervention. We also wonder about PAUSD's 2021 universal screening results for 1st-3rd graders, given the passage of SB237 by California's Senate Education Committee which would (1) Require the State to develop an approved list of culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate tools to screen for risk of dyslexia, (2) Require all schools to screen students for risk of dyslexia in each of the grades K-2, inclusive, and (3) Require results to be made available to teachers and parents in a timely fashion in order to better understand students' challenges and adapt accordingly. After all, 1 in 5 students are affected by Dyslexia.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Argumedo for her work this year in consolidating the current dyslexia work across the district for both elementary and secondary. The efforts for elementary are progressing nicely. CAC supports the \$350,000 request to fund OG training for all Kinder through 3rd grade General Education teachers. And we hope someone is attending to the intensity, frequency and fidelity of student instruction. If any additional funds can be found for training secondary staff, we believe that would be money well spent to help students who will not benefit from the district's early intervention efforts. Last week I had questions about the 1.6 FTE previously approved for secondary dyslexia work. How was that money spent during pandemic? especially since secondary students have been doing remote learning for an entire year. What extended learning opportunities will there be for them as we return to campus and in spring and summer? Are there pull out or push-in opportunities planned since students are "Learning to Read" through third grade, but "Reading to Learn" above third grade. This is a particular concern for us in secondary years when students are demonstrating comprehension through their writing, which we know to also be a weakness for disproportionate populations in PAUSD, per NWEA and CAASPP.

The work is just beginning. We had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Reynolds [PAUSD's new Lead Principal of Literacy Instruction] and are encouraged by her experience and attitude. I hope there will

be as promising a candidate to focus on our secondary efforts. Lastly, we are supportive of Dr. Argumedo's recommendation to form an advisory group consisting of parents and staff. The lived experiences of teachers, parents and students should guide the district's work in this important area.

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## **NEWLY DEVELOPED VIRTUAL LEARNING PROGRAM FOR ALL GRADES**

Although remote learning has by and large been challenging for adults and students, we have also heard anecdotally that there is a subset of students who are in fact thriving with distance learning. These are students who **learn differently** and are in fact doing better academically and or emotionally when they are not in the traditional classroom setting. Students that find being outside of class or off campus much better for their learning. Therefore, we want to encourage development of a [virtual learning option](#) that is in-between exclusively distance and exclusively in-person, at least for the 2021-22 school year.

Let's use this moment to see how we can serve the needs of more kids with a different profile. Why return every single student to an environment that we know does NOT serve them? What is an appropriate education for them?

We have had such positive feedback from the intentionally designed elementary program for distance learning. CAC supports developing a secondary program (esp HS) that leverages existing school models including blended learning, our relationship with Foothill-DeAnza, and the creativity and commitment of the Innovation & Agility department to integrate instruction, projects, skills and activities around career exploration themes. We really appreciate the thinking around designing a high-quality virtual program (broader than home & hospital) with social interaction so students can also participate in the comprehensive school programs such as band, theater, sports, etc.

And of course, we are in full agreement about the need for Education Specialists to work with general education teachers to adhere to the IEPs for special education students.