



Good evening, we are here tonight on behalf of the Palo Alto Community Advisory Committee ("CAC") of Special Education.

We want to clarify, for the record, misinformation about the CAC organization. The CAC was created to serve families and to advise the PAUSD Board and Administration. We were acknowledged by the board in 1988 as a community partner.

CAC welcomes parents throughout the district who sincerely desire to serve parents, family and the community and wish to be part of the conversation and advocacy of the larger committee.

We are a subcommittee of Santa Clara [Special Education Local Plan Area \("SELPA"\) 1 CAC](#). We are acknowledged by them as a robust organization with a focus on special education issues in Palo Alto. We have two [district representatives](#) that are appointed by the board of trustees to the SELPA 1 CAC.

We are a contributing partner to the Palo Alto Council of PTAs (" PTAC"). Our integrated efforts have supported PTA Special Education/ Inclusion representatives at each site school since 2011-2012. In addition, we have contributed to the PTAC [endorsement](#) of the California PTA Dyslexia Resolution (2019), along with advocacy for Social Emotional Learning ("SEL") development, Bullying prevention, and Inclusive practices throughout the district for all students.

Our work includes Parent Education and Support, Community Building through IEP and Transition IEP parent workshops, Inclusive Resource Fairs where families can find after school programs and summer camps and other support for students with special needs, co-sponsoring the Special Olympics, Family Fun Day, Holiday Tea, Sweetheart Awards and Bus Driver's Appreciation.

Some major highlights of the CAC's contribution to the current high quality Special Education, Equity, Inclusion and Disability Awareness throughout the district and in this community are the following:

- We published numerous special education handbooks jointly with the special ed department in 1990's. We created a parent support hot line. In January 2019, we had our 30th anniversary reception with a key speaker, Yolanda Conway, the special education director at that time.
- The [Sweetheart Awards](#) have been recognizing people who made a positive difference for students and families with IEP, 504 and learning differences since 2005.
- Subsequently after the [OCR report on Bullying](#) of the district in 2012, we brought the celebration of [Unity Day](#) to the district in 2013 for Bullying Prevention. Now the district celebrates Unity Day every year at each site with PTA special ed/inclusion representatives. While each school might do different

activities with the help of teachers, parents and student leaders, they have shared a theme — “When We Stand Together, No One Stands Alone”. We also have been working with the district to celebrate [Inclusive School Weeks](#).

- We [requested in 2014](#) that the district assemble a task force to collect more parent input and better "understand outcomes associated with receiving services within special education," and as a response the district special ed external review was conducted by Hehir in 2015.
- With our encouragement, in 2018, the district’s own publicly accountable, systematic review of Special Education was completed which was presented as “ [Vision for Special Education](#)” and that continued to the current “ Promise” to: focus on student outcomes, increase capacity, support staff collaboration and co planning, and engage parents.
- During the [pandemic](#), we worked closely with the PTAC and PTA special ed/inclusion representatives that altogether advised the district to prioritize Students with the most extensive support needs on top of their in person learning return list. In July 2020, the Extended School Year program for Futures students was offered in person.
- We have been serving on important district committees in order to bring the special education parent voice such as Social Emotional Learning Curriculum Committee (2016), Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services (“CCEIS”) plan committee to address disproportionality in special education (2021), Elementary Literacy Curriculum committee (2022), Mod-Severe Support Needs Curriculum Pilot Committee, and other short term ad hoc committees.
- We continue to work with awareness training that includes teachers and parents. In 2019 and 2020, we worked with PAEA on dyslexia awareness training and simulations.
- From 2019, we [have advocated](#) for equal access and inclusion to the City of Palo Alto recreation programs with the City of Palo Alto Human Resource Commission and the Magical Bridge Foundation. We have invited the recreation program coordinators regularly to deliver mini seminars in our public meetings, and to participate in Family Fun days and Inclusive Resource Fairs. The City’s Magical series of adapted programs was created after 2019 and has been diversified to include Art, Dance, Music, Theatre and Junior’s Museum programs.

We appreciate our ongoing partnership with the special education department and the district leadership. Our goals are aligned to support student success and encourage parent engagement. Our meetings are open to the public and we encourage community members with an interest in Special Education to attend.

Sincerely,
Elaine Heal, CAC Advisory Committee, Rika Yamamoto, CAC chairperson

Contact us at paloaltocac@gmail.com

Visit us at cacpaloalto.org

Helping families in Palo Alto since 1988