

Special Education Parent Newsletter

Winter 2023

Special Education Department Updates

The PAUSD Special Education department has been busy this past trimester developing programs, providing professional development, planning for the end of the year and Extended School Year (ESY), and discussing goals and initiatives for next year. Many of these topics are highlighted below in this Winter 2023 newsletter. Additionally, if you haven't yet had the opportunity to visit our [PAUSD Special Education website](#), take a look as we are constantly adding updates! Our Special Education Leadership Team (SELT) is a dedicated team of coordinators, program specialists, managers and office staff who work closely with the site administrators, teachers, aides, families and students. If you have any questions about your child's programs or services, please click on "Meet our Team" on our special education website to see site assignments; feel free to email our team anytime. We are committed to our partnership and supporting the families of students with disabilities.

February 2023 Board Meeting

At the February 14, 2023, Board Meeting, the co-directors, Cynthia Loleng-Perez and Amanda Boyce, provided a staff report on the restructuring initiatives in the special education department. This year, we reorganized the department to eliminate the division of elementary and secondary programs and developed a preschool-to-adult transition model that supports students ages 3-22. The department is led by co-directors who oversee the operation of programs across the district and continue the collaborative relationships with sites, parents and community. At the Board Meeting, we defined the roles and responsibilities of the Directors, Coordinators, and Program Specialists relative to oversight of nonpublic programs, mediations and settlements, alternative dispute resolutions, communications, hiring, teacher supports, compliance and program development.

Additionally, we shared the consolidation plan for our elementary moderate/severe learning centers. Currently, five of seven learning centers serve students in TK/K- Grade 5 which presents many challenges and does not maximize opportunities for student growth. By consolidating our learning centers on to fewer campuses, we are able to serve students in a TK-Grade 2 and Grades 3-5 model which provides the following benefits:

- Focused approach relative to student goals and services

- Students will get more direct contact/work with Education Specialist
- Increased opportunities for students to work in small groups
- Better collaboration opportunities between special and general education teachers
- Smoother transition to middle school after experiencing two different core teachers
- Greater experiential alignment with middle and high school
- Increased opportunities for special education teacher growth and retention

There were a number of questions that arose relative to how campuses were selected for consolidation so a [FAQ](#) was posted on our special education website.

Moderate/Severe Supplementary Curriculum Pilot

In November 2022, we launched a supplementary curriculum pilot for our moderate/severe/futures classrooms. We have seven teachers participating in the pilot who teach at all three levels: elementary, middle, and high schools. Additionally, two parents from our CAC (Community Advisory Council for Special Education in Palo Alto) are part of the committee.

The pilot teachers are using three different programs with students this year; Teachtown, Readtopia, and Unique. Before the launch of a new program, the committee received an overview and training from the publisher. Throughout the pilot, our amazing Palo Alto Technology Collaboration Hub (PATCH) team provided materials and support to ensure a successful pilot. During our March 10 Professional Development, all moderate/severe/futures teachers were invited to preview materials and observe and teach lessons from our pilot programs. In the spring, we plan to gather the group to make a decision regarding which supplemental curriculum to purchase for the 2023-24 school year.



Moderate/Severe Learning Center teachers exploring pilot curriculum.

March 10 Professional Learning Day

One of the most notable aspects of working in PAUSD are the professional development opportunities. Our special education service providers engaged in a number of different trainings and discussions on March 10 in order to advance their knowledge and skills. Please see the variety of learning topics below:

- Moderate/Severe/Futures teachers previewed material and lessons from our Teachtown and Readtopia curriculum pilot. Additionally, they were trained on one of our assessment tools, Brigance.
- Mild/Moderate teachers participated in their site-based professional development.
- Special Education Instructional Assistants were trained by the Santa Clara Inclusion Collaborative on best inclusive practices. They also learned more about our multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) and reviewed our Instructional Assistant Handbook.
- Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs) met as a group to learn more about the SLPs role in the MTSS process, especially as it pertains to students with articulation errors. They worked together to streamline the MTSS/RtI process for SLPs in PAUSD, to ensure more consistent practices across the district. The group ended the day with case-study presentations.
- Psychologists spent the morning focusing on wellness and self-care utilizing various strategies. The afternoon was spent with Dr. Ortiz to explore culturally and linguistically sensitive assessment as it relates to Special Education evaluations.
- Adaptive Physical Education teachers joined the other PE teachers for CPR/First Aid and Swim Safety Training.

Community Events

Our special education families had many opportunities for community building and learning about programs and resources during these past months. PAUSD is grateful for our ongoing partnership with the [Palo Alto CAC](#) and the [Palo Alto Council of PTAs](#) who co-host many events with our district. If you were not able to attend, information is linked below.

On Wednesday, February 22, the fourth Annual Transition IEP Parent Night took place at the District Office. Rising sixth, ninth and post-secondary parents were invited to this informational presentation to hear an overview of the district special education programs for [middle school](#), [high school](#) and [postsecondary](#) including general course selection, placement and Q & As.

On Tuesday, February 28, the Palo Alto Inclusive [Resource Fair](#) for summer camps and afterschool programs took place at the JLS Cafetorium. Dr. Lee, SJSU associate professor, gave a presentation titled [Physical for All](#) and PAUSD Adaptive Physical Education teachers demonstrated activities during the interactive presentation. There were more than thirty exhibitors covering various topics for a variety of age ranges and needs from early elementary through young adulthood. A creativity cart and art activities were offered for children while parents enjoyed the exhibit.

On Tuesday, March 7, the annual CAC Sweetheart Award Ceremony took place at Addison Elementary School. This was the first time PAUSD has been able to host the event in person since 2020 and it was well attended celebration! More than sixty-five PAUSD staff and students were nominated for their kindness and outstanding support of our students with disabilities, 504 plans or learning differences. This event started in 2005 by Palo Alto CAC to demonstrate appreciation for individuals who make a

who was recognized at the CAC Sweetheart Awards as they sponsored the adapted bikes rodeo for our mod-severe student groups for the last two consecutive years.

We have some exciting events planned in the months ahead. Please see schedule and opportunities to participate below:

- Special Olympics Basketball: Friday, March 24, 9:30am-12pm @ Fletcher Middle School Gym
- Special Olympics Track and Field Event: Friday, May 19, 9:30am-12pm @ Gunn High School
- Bus Driver Appreciation Breakfast hosted by CAC (April 2023). - If you and your children have time, please make/ design a thank you card for your bus driver or for the bus drivers in general to show your appreciation for their work. You can submit an online card or email a photo of the card to paltoacac@gmail.com, and it will be shared!
- CAC Monthly General Meeting:
 - Amanda Boyce, co-director of Special Education, will be in attendance, as well as our school board liaison, Todd Collins.
 - Meeting topics and details will be posted on the CAC webpage: <https://cacpalalto.org/about-us/meetings/>
 - March 21: 12-1:30pm, April 17: 7-8:30pm, May 16: 12-1:30pm



Palo Alto Inclusive Resource Fair

Looking Ahead...

In the weeks ahead, we will focus on preparing for Extended School Year (ESY). ESY provides programs and services to assist the students with working toward the same goals and objectives that the student works on during the school year. ESY services are only provided for those areas on the current IEP where the student has demonstrated regression of skills during an extended school break and has limited ability to benefit from re-teaching of skills after an extended school break. The determination of ESY services is discussed by the student's IEP team and added to a student's IEP. For students who have ESY services written on their IEP, our department will be reaching out shortly to confirm participation as our **deadline to respond is April 14**. Please see table below regarding dates, times, and locations of ESY:

Program	Grade Level	Dates	School Site
Greendell Cubberly	Preschool and Post Secondary	June 8 to July 7 8:30am - 12:30pm <i>*No School 6/19, 7/3, 7/4</i>	Greendell
ESY Elementary and Middle School	1 – 8 (during the 2022-23 school year)	June 8 to July 7 8:30am - 12:30pm <i>*No School 6/19, 7/3, 7/4</i>	Briones Elementary Walter Hays Elementary JLS Middle School
ESY High School	9 – 12 (during the 2022-23 school year)	June 12 to July 21 9:00am - 2:30pm <i>*No School 6/19, 7/3, 7/4</i>	Gunn High School
ESY Post Secondary	Ages 18-22	June 26 - July 21 9:00am - 2:30pm <i>*No School 6/19, 7/3, 7/4</i>	Cubberly