SAN MATEO COUNTY SPECIAL EDUCATION LOCAL PLAN AREA (SELPA)

101 Twin Dolphin Drive · Redwood City, CA 94065 · (650) 802-5306 · selpa.smcoe.org

EDUCATIONAL SETTING OBSERVATIONS BY PARENTS AND PARENTAL REPRESENTATIVES

The Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) and its member Local Education Agencies (LEAs) recognize that any individual who is a parent or parent representative is a full and equal partner in developing an appropriate Individualized Education Program (IEP) for their child. To support this collaboration, parents and authorized parental representatives are provided reasonable opportunities to observe their child's current educational setting or a proposed placement.

The primary goal of our schools is to provide a safe, productive, and uninterrupted learning environment. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of all students and minimize disruptions, all classroom observations are governed by California law and the procedures outlined below.

Legal Authority & References

- **California Education Code § 51101(a)(1):** Parent rights to observe classroom(s).
- **California Education Code § 49091.10:** Parental inspection rights and classroom visitation.
- **California Education Code § 32210 & 32211:** Protection of school grounds and disruption of classes.
- **California Education Code § 51512:** Prohibits use of an electronic listening or recording device in a classroom.
- **California Penal Code § 626.7 & 626.8:** Authority of site administrators to maintain campus safety.
- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g):** Protection of student privacy and confidential records.

Observation Guidelines

1. Scheduling & Frequency

- **Advance Notice:** Requests should be submitted in writing, on the Classroom Observation Request form, at least **five (5) school days** prior to the requested observation date so that the LEA can arrange the visit without undue interference with instruction.

- **Approval & Scheduling:** All visits must be pre-approved by the Special Education Administrator or Site Administrator. The administration reserves the right to reschedule to avoid scheduling conflicts, testing windows, or classroom disruptions.
- **Duration & Frequency:** To protect instructional time and minimize disruption to the educational environment, observations will generally be limited to **30 to 60 minutes** and typically occur no more than once per semester/trimester. However, longer observation durations and/or additional observations may be approved when reasonably necessary to support a formal evaluation or if required by an IEP team. The LEA reserves the right to authorize additional observations on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the educational needs of the student, the purpose of the observation, and the impact on the instructional program.
- **Parental Representatives:** If an independent evaluator or representative observes on behalf of the parent, the request must state a clear written rationale/reason for the visit, identify any standardized observational checklist or measures to be used, and include a signed *Release of Information Form* from the parent. Only one (1) observer is permitted at a time, except where necessary as a reasonable accommodation or to provide interpretation, as approved in advance.

2. School Site Visitor Protocols

- **Sign-In & Badging:** Every visitor who is a parent or parent representative must strictly follow all school site visitor protocols upon arrival, including checking in at the main office, presenting valid identification, wearing an issued visitor badge at all times, and complying with all site and LEA safety procedures.
- **Escort Required:** Observer(s) must be accompanied by a designated LEA staff member for the entire duration of the visit.

3. Student Confidentiality & Privacy Standards

- **FERPA & Privacy Protection:** Classroom observers will have no access to confidential student information, records, grade books, or IEP documents of other students in the setting.
- **Strict Privacy Expectations:** Observers may only observe the targeted student or program. Observers must maintain absolute confidentiality regarding any identifiable student information, behaviors, or educational needs observed during the visit.

4. Classroom Conduct & Visitor Expectations

- **Non-Disruption:** Observers will be seated in an unobtrusive location. Observers may not interact with students, converse with teachers or staff during instructional time, or inspect work samples of other students.
- **Staff Performance:** Observations are designed to view the educational setting and student, not to evaluate staff performance. Any feedback or concerns regarding staff

performance must be directed privately in writing to the Special Education Administrator or Site Administrator.

5. Strict Electronic Device, Recording, and AI Prohibition

To comply with federal/state privacy laws and maintain a secure environment:

- **No Audio or Video Recording:** The use of any electronic listening, recording, or photography device is strictly prohibited.
- **Prohibited Devices:** The audio or video recording restriction applies to cell phones, tablets, smartwatches, recording pens, audio recorders, and wearable smart technology (including, but not limited to, Meta/Ray-Ban Smart Glasses or any camera-enabled eyewear). Cell phones must be silenced and put away for the duration of the visit.
- **No AI Transcription:** The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) devices, apps, software, or smart-assistants to record, capture, transcribe, summarize, or analyze classroom conversations, instruction, or interactions is strictly forbidden.
- Failure to comply with these privacy rules will result in immediate termination of the observation visit and removal from campus.

6. Post-Observation Debrief & Notes

- **Debrief Availability:** Following the observation, the accompanying administrator or staff member will be available for up to 15 minutes to debrief or answer brief questions regarding the observation, if requested. Formal IEP discussions or extended inquiries must be scheduled separately.
- **Copy of Notes:** The LEA may make a reasonable request for a copy of observation notes or other documentation generated by the observer in connection with the observation, consistent with applicable laws and subject to any asserted privileges or protections. Any such request will be made within a reasonable time following the observation.

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CLASSROOM OBSERVATION REQUEST & AGREEMENT FORM

(To be completed by a parent or parent representative at least 5 school days prior to requested date)

Part 1: Request Details

Student Name: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

School Site: _____ **Grade/Program:** _____

Person Requesting Visit: _____

Relationship to Student: [ ] Parent/Guardian [ ]/Representative/Independent Evaluator*

Phone Number: _____ **Email:** _____

Requested Date(s) & Time(s): _____

Specific Purpose of Observation: _____

**If applicant is a Parental Representative/Evaluator, please attach a signed Release of Information. If applicant is an Evaluator, please attach a copy of your Credentials and/or CV.*

Part 2: Confidentiality & Visitor Agreement

By signing below, I agree to the following terms during my classroom visit:

1. **Site Protocols:** I will follow all school site visitor requirements, including checking in/out at the office, wearing a visitor badge, and abiding by LEA safety policies.
2. **Non-Disruption:** I will remain seated in the designated area, will not interact with staff or students during instructional time, and will not disrupt the classroom environment.
3. **Privacy & Confidentiality:** I understand that I am observing the designated student or program only. Information regarding other students is strictly confidential under FERPA. If I observe or hear information about another student, I will keep it in strict confidence.
4. **No Electronic Recording / No AI:** I will **NOT** use cell phones, audio/video recording equipment, wearable smart cameras (e.g., Ray-Ban Meta glasses), or AI transcription tools/apps at any time during my visit. All devices will be silenced and stored away.
5. **Notes & Debrief:** I understand the LEA may request copies of my observation notes and I will cooperate with a reasonable request for information regarding the observation, consistent with applicable laws and subject to any asserted privileges or protections. Administrative staff will be available for up to 15 minutes for a post-visit debrief.
6. **Staff Evaluation:** I understand this observation visit is not for evaluating staff. Any comments regarding staff will be submitted privately to a site administrator.

Observer Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

For District/Administrator Use Only

[ ] Request Approved [ ] Request Rescheduled

Scheduled Date: _____ **Time:** _____ to _____

Designated Staff Escort: _____

Signed *Release of Information* on File (if Rep): [ ] Yes [ ] N/A

Administrator Signature: _____

Participating LEAs: Bayshore Elementary School District, Belmont-Redwood Shores School District, Brisbane School District, Burlingame School District, Cabrillo Unified School District, Connect Community Charter, Design Tech High School, Hillsborough City School District, Jefferson Elementary School District, Jefferson Union High School District, KIPP Esperanza, KIPP Excelencia, KIPP Valiant Community Charter, La Honda-Pescadero Unified School District, Las Lomitas Elementary School District, Menlo Park City School District, Millbrae Elementary School District, Oxford Day Academy, Pacifica School District, Portola Valley Elementary School District, Ravenswood City School District, Redwood City Elementary School District, San Bruno Park School District, San Carlos Charter Learning, San Carlos School District, San Mateo County Office of Education, San Mateo-Foster City School District, San Mateo Union High School District, Sequoia Union High School District, South San Francisco Unified School District, Summit Preparatory Charter High School, Woodside Elementary School District