

**SANTEE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

February 10, 2009

**MINUTES**

Douglas E. Giles  
Educational Resource Center  
9619 Cuyamaca Street  
Santee, California

**A. OPENING PROCEDURES**

1. Call to Order and Welcome

President El-Hajj called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Board members present:

Dianne El-Hajj, President  
Dustin Burns, Vice President  
Barbara Ryan, Clerk  
Allen Carlisle, Member  
Dan Bartholomew, Member

Staff present:

Dr. Lisbeth Johnson, Superintendent and Secretary to the Board  
Bill Clark, Assistant Superintendent, Business Services  
Emily Andrade, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services  
Minnie Malin, Director, Human Resources  
JoAnn Murphy, Consultant  
Linda Vail, Executive Assistant and Recording Secretary

2. President El-Hajj read the District Mission Statement.

3. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dustin Burns.

4. Approval of Agenda

Member Ryan moved to approve the agenda.

**Motion:** Ryan                      **Second:** Burns                      **Vote:** 5-0

**B. PUBLIC COMMUNICATION**

There were no comments from the public.

**C. SPECIAL EDUCATION BOARD WORKSHOP**

**I. Introduction**

Dr. Johnson reported that Administration would be presenting their interim report on the special education study. This study was an outcome of the FCMAT study and the goals are to increase communication with principals, staff, and parents and find the most effective ways to improve the District's special education services provided at the schools. Dr. Johnson introduced the panel of presenters, Emily Andrade, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services; Debora Beaver, special education parent; Marcia Ginn-May and Lisa McColl, Principals; Raydene Wolf, Director of Special Education; Stephanie Pierce, Director of Instructional Development; and JoAnn Murphy, Consultant. The report included a strategic action plan recommendation for special education.

**II. Special Education Strategic Action Plan**

Administration and a parent representative, provided a mid-year update on the Action Plan progress.

The objective of administration was to address the following goals: improve communication with parents and staff, enhance collaboration throughout the District, and improve instruction, curriculum and monitoring of student progress. Each goal was addressed.

**Goal #1: Improve Communication with Parents and Staff**

Administration has achieved the following objectives toward this goal:

- Formed a parent advisory council which meets regularly,
- Discussed the development of parent liaisons,
- Provided parent training on the SST and IEP processes,
- Distributed a parent survey and collected data,
- Updated the parent handbook,
- Increased support through staff trainings,
- Implemented monthly meetings with principals and ERC special education administration,
- Met with consultant JoAnn Murphy, and
- Held a workshop for school administration.

President El-Hajj noted it is evident from the parent survey results that there is a need to increase communication between teachers in the transition from special education preschool programs from other district into Santee. different districts.

Member Burns asked if all parents had the opportunity to participate in the survey. Raydene Wolf-St.Clair said two copies were sent to parents and students were provided a "free homework pass" by some teachers to encourage their return. Member Ryan said 10% is not a bad return and we received almost 20%.

Debora Beaver, a parent member of the Special Education Advisory Committee, said she appreciates the hard work the Board and Administration have done and has enjoyed being a part of the Special Education Advisory Committee. She received the survey and was surprised to find that she did not know some of the answers and was glad to see the concerns of the parents addressed so quickly. The biggest challenge is the parent handbook and to provide information in an understandable format that parents will read. She expressed her concern that interest from the parents seems to be dwindling.

Member Ryan suggested parent interest may have decreased because they see some positive changes occurring. Mrs. Beaver said there is still a lot of work for the parents to do and the meetings have been productive. Mrs. Beaver said moving kids around is a larger issue and that is something that will need to be in the forefront. Mrs. Beaver thanked the Board on behalf of all parents for the time they are taking to make positive changes to special education.

Administrators are working closely with teachers to improve the overall education for special education students. The handbook has been reviewed with site administrators and updated. Stress levels seem to be reduced among the staff with the increased communication.

Member Carlisle asked if the training was for site administrators only or all the people who attend the IEP's. JoAnn Murphy said it was a process, and it began with the site administrators. Emily Andrade said Administration has talked to special education staff about parent interaction and involvement in the IEP process.

Member Bartholomew is concerned about only receiving 150 surveys and that the information we have may not be broad enough. Mrs. Andrade said a large number of special education students are in RSP, speech, or are pull-out students that do not require a significant IEP with lots of goals. Member Burns suggested giving a survey to each parent at their child's IEP.

Mrs. Murphy said it might be good to go back to the individuals that attended the parent meeting and solicit results from them because they seemed to have the complaints. Dr. Johnson said there is a segment of the parent population that is unhappy and it may be beneficial to see where the pattern exists and find where the families are that we are not serving as we should.

Member Bartholomew asked if demographics were included on the survey. Member Burns asked if grade levels were included. Mrs. Wolf-St. Clair said no but many parents entered their names even though it was optional and she can get the raw data on those surveys. It was noted that future surveys could include questions about demographics including school, grade level, and disability.

#### **Goal #2: Enhance Collaboration Throughout the District**

All staff, including special education staff, are participating in professional learning communities. Special education staff is receiving positive experiences with this participation. Parents and general education staff have become integral members of the IEP teams. Training is being provided for special education job alikes on the importance of educating parents in the IEP process. Principals and staff have visited Learning Resource Centers (LRC) in other districts. LRC models are being discussed with special education staff and RTI teams have been developed at each sites. Special education teachers are becoming a more collegial group. Mrs. Andrade reported that Learning Resource Centers are being explored and may work a little different at each school. Member Burns said we may wish to consider having a base model and schools can modify it to what works for them. Mrs. Andrade said the "base model" is currently being sought.

Principal Lisa McColl shared how the Learning Resource Center is working at Rio Seco. Early systematic intervention makes the biggest difference and will provide a reduction in the special education population by preventing students from needing special education programs in later grades. Staff needs to identify what the students' needs are and what resources are available on their campus. Resources may include the speech and language specialist, bilingual assistant, instructional assistants, the special education class teacher and

assistants, and regular education teachers. Reverse mainstreaming is occurring in junior high in math. Site collaboration has greatly increased and the IEP's are being addressed with aligned goals.

Member Burns asked why other schools with the same type of demographics have not put the same kind of program in place. Mrs. Andrade said other schools have been visiting Rio Seco and are talking about how they could make this program work at their schools.

Member Burns is happy to see that every student is being touched through the model at Rio Seco. Dr. Johnson said that although the LRC model is a lean process, there are staff that would be anxious about the process because of the differing levels of expertise. The common vision to move toward these goals will help kids. Joann Murphy said the critical element for success is the buy-in from the staff.

Member Bartholomew asked what the response from staff was with the proposed changes. Mrs. Andrade said changes are beginning at each site and they are watching for resistance at the schools. Special education staff has not previously been involved in learning plans for general education students and these have now become integral parts of their learning.

The environments and coming together to develop interventions as part of the RTI teams have produced a collaborative nature and a higher level of accountability. Staff members need to be given the opportunity to take a risk by trying something new and different.

### **Goal #3: Improve Instruction, Curriculum and Monitoring of Student Progress.**

Stephanie Pierce reported on Response to Intervention (RTI) and shared a "menu" of options that has been developed to support schools. There is currently a plan to integrate it similarly into the literacy plan. Member Burns said everyone is talking about the "menu." Member Ryan said not to forget this great idea when we look to nominate a Golden Bell program to CSBA. Mrs. Pierce said it has been fun and the ERC staff is excited about the possibilities.

Mrs. Pierce said Autism modules on the internet have been provided to staff and will be provide to parents. Principals are also being trained to deal effectively with Autistic children.

The ERC staff, Executive Council, and JoAnn Murphy have met to determine how resources can be best used. Student data monitoring and district assessment guidelines have been implemented and will help to better monitor student progress. Monitoring student progress would be easier if there was a data management system to integrate CASEMIS data with PowerSchool. The Reading Committee is developing intervention pathways. Administration has developed a trimester special education assessment plan and is working on a special education student placement process.

There have been many positive outcomes in the communication enhancements and positive outcomes are also being seen in programs for children. The door is just opening and there are many plans for moving forward.

### **III. Stabilizing SDC Student Placement**

Mrs. Andrade provided a report and recommendation for stabilizing special education special day class student placement. She presented the concept of regionalization of special day class students. This plan would reduce student movement, increase student integration, and provide a more effective use of resources. It would potentially decrease the cost of transportation. Member Burns asked if students would be placed at schools that transition to the students' correct high schools. Mrs. Andrade said regionalization is a huge task and there will be a lot of communication with the stakeholders. High school will need to be considered as well. Mrs. Andrade plans to bring the Board a proposed implementation plan for 2010-11.

### **IV. Principals Professional Development**

JoAnn Murphy provided a report on the recommendations provided by the Principals' focus group and professional development for Principals. She shared that as an outsider she has been able to see the whole process and believes Santee is becoming a model of how to implement the recommendations from a FCMAT study. The training component is a 3-year plan. The first phase of the plan is staff development, providing site principals general training on special education. She said the focus group for principals was very beneficial and she hopes it becomes a standing group. Next is training for special education teachers, and the third step would be training of the IEP teams.

Staff development is needed to build positive relationships with the parents because staff must understand “where the parents are coming from”. Staff needs a good understanding that special education parents go through a grief process and need to be taken seriously. Parents need and deserve follow-through, empathy, and respect. Staff needs to use basic courtesy and set up a welcoming environment for parents.

Principals wish to work collaboratively with the District staff on the location and composition of special education classes and the assignment of itinerant and support staff. Principals look at the special education department as a wonderful resource that provides leadership on compliance issues. Principals would like collaboration before procedural changes occur and more equity in budget allocations for meeting student needs. Mrs. Murphy said the more classes become regionalized, more resources are available.

Board members expressed they are pleased with what has been accomplished in a short period of time. Member Bartholomew said there is a new tone that is being set for parents. Member Carlisle appreciates all the work the team has done. Member Burns said it feels good to see the progress. Member Carlisle said he supports Member Burn’s recommendation for districtwide consistency as much as possible and appreciates the emphasis on making parents part of the team in an IEP. President El-Hajj said if the RTI pyramid is used consistently, it will build on itself.

**B. CLOSED SESSION**

President El-Hajj said the Board would meet in closed session to discuss the following:

**1. Public Employment Matters (Govt. Code § 54957)**

*Public Employee Discipline/Dismissal/Release*

The Board entered closed session at 9:25 p.m.

**C. RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION**

The Board reconvened to open session at 9:55 p.m. No action was reported.

**D. ADJOURNMENT**

The February 10, 2009, special meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.