

SPECIAL EDUCATION UPDATE

June 28, 2011 - Report to Board

Good evening President Zurita, Board members, Superintendent Frison, cabinet, and community.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to provide you with an update, outlining the success, initiative and on-going progress of the Office of Special education – or OSE - report on the Office of Special Education – or OSE - as we close out the 10-11 school year, and begin the operation of the 2011-12.

We began the 10-11 school year with a strong start. With the April 2010 CST results, SWD subgroup achieved a 83 point gain in API. This gain was more significant than any other sub groups in CUSD, and more significant than our neighboring districts, including LAUSD. SWD also made AYP in Math.

As we continue to bridge the gap between general education an special education, and continue on this positive path, it was imperative during this past school year (and beyond) that OSE worked collaboratively with other departments such as EL, Curriculum & Instruction, as well as with both the elementary & secondary Associate Superintendents and all of the initiatives that were implemented at both levels.

And Special Education teachers participated in these initiatives, such as Thinking Maps, Depth & Complexity, & Take I.

In addition, 98 % of the special education teachers who teach in SDC (special day class) program participated in the ELD training provided by Alongside Coaching, and many of them continued to become certified.

“More can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor”....a quote from Robert Marzano.

Believing this, OSE also provided its own bi-weekly trainings and PDs to special education teachers to further assist them in the implementation of the above mentioned initiatives to students with disabilities, using various instructional strategies that will assist our students in learning given their individualized learning style. Our trainings also consisted of reading, interpreting and using data to further assist with instruction. There were also trainings for general education teachers who co-teach with RSP teachers – or resource specialists – for students who are mainstreamed in general education classes.

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Additional workshops/professional development were made possible, using the federal grant ARRA, these PDs include, but not limited to:

- **Orton-Gillingham** - this training program focused on highly structured, phonics based multi-sensory education in teaching reading, in conjunction with the reading programs that the district currently uses.
- **Autism Spectrum Therapy** – provided techniques and tools to teachers and paraprofessionals to implement when working with autistic students, which will assist Autistic students in more social interaction and to bring about meaningful behavior change. This agency also provides direct service to students.
- **CPI – Crisis Prevention Intervention** – an intense training which both school police and CUSD staff participated in to assist staff in appropriately de-escalating serious student behavior.
- **Behavior Frontiers** – provided tools and techniques to staff and paraprofessionals who work with students who have emotional disabilities.
- **Basics2** – a curriculum for our severely disabled students to assist teachers on delivering not only life-skills, but also provides teachers with a frame-work focusing on skills in the 5 domains
 - Functional Academics
 - Domestic Domain
 - Community Domain
 - Vocational Domain
 - Recreation & Leisure
- Professional Development was also provided to OSE staff: program specialists and school psychologists, as well as administrators throughout the year.

(using ARRA funds) In addition to trainings/professional development & workshops, special education teachers were provided with new technology to use in the classroom that enhances the delivery of their instruction. We all know that instruction through technology has yield positive academic results across classrooms, schools, and districts. And all Special Day Classes were provided with desk top computers for students, including our pre-k classes.

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OSE also held monthly meetings with our Parents of SWD. These meetings are called SNAC: Special Needs Advisory Committee. For this committee, elections for officers were held, and it now has a president and vice president. Topics included:

- ***Successful homework practice for your child***
- ***Everything you wanted to know about your child's disabilities***
- ***Effective behavior strategies to use @ home***
- ***What parents should know about school attendance.***

And last but not least, OSE put out 2 news letters capturing:

- the work of staff,
- joint projects with other departments,
- highlighting our students with disabilities,
- new programs initiatives.

And we are looking forward to the expansion of our news letter for 2011-12.

During ESY/ extended school year, or summer school, OSE, in conjunction with our HR department will be providing classes to our special education teachers who currently hold a mild/moderate Education specialist credential, which upon completion, will provide them with an Autism Added Authorization. This program, approved by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, will provide them with the expertise & knowledge in grades K-12 of special education research, services and programs as it relates to Autism.

Just as we opened the 10-11 school year on a positive, we also ended it with one: CUSD became a single district SELPA, or Compton SELPA, effective July 1st.

SELPA –Special Education Local Plan Area – is a support service office for special education students and programs. A SELPA is responsible for insuring that all services are provided, as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal law for Special Education, to students with disabilities (SWD). The SELPA handles all the administrative duties of special education with the California Department of Education (CDE).

The SELPA is responsible for facilitation and interpretation of all legal requirements. It provides information and resources to families of children with disabilities so they can fully understand their rights. A SELPA also frequently functions as a catalyst for the development of new programs for SWD that are also cost-effective.

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Compton SELPA's goal will be to continue delivering high quality special education programs and services to SWD, and is also responsible for seeing that every eligible child receives appropriate services. It will also provide on-going professional development activities to foster better relationships between schools and the families of our SWD.

While we are busy preparing for this new entity, we are also busy preparing for the opening of the 2011-12 school year. Initiatives for this coming school year are:

(1) Under our SELPA, our monthly SNAC meetings will now be called CAC meetings – Community Advisory Committee. The meetings will continue monthly. But in addition to these meetings for parents of SWD, we will also have quarterly meetings for parents who students **don't** qualify for special education services, but have some challenges that may be impeding on their academic performance. These meetings will provide tools & resources for parents to utilize outside of school, and will be facilitated by our school psychologists.

(2) We will also have trainings for parents who would like to be informed on some of the instructional strategies, and professional development given to staff so that parents can be knowledgeable of some of the strategies that they may be able to use at home with their students.

(3) We are piloting at one of our elementary schools, a program called a “blended program”. This is a program/class that is team taught with a general education teacher and a special education teacher consisting of identified special education students and “students at risk” who might other wise be referred for special education assessment. With this program, we will be able to reduce the number of referrals for students that are often made because of their response to RTI - response to general ed instruction

(4) And on this same line of referrals, we have been given a grant from California Department of Education in the amount of \$45,000 through the State Performance Plan. It is a 2-year local assistance grant to assist us in decreasing the overrepresentation of African-American students in special education. With this grant, we will develop a committee of stakeholders to work collaboratively to renew, revise, and/or create policies, procedures and practices in order to ensure that all students are appropriately identified – and not overly identified. We will also receive technical assistance from a state-approved facilitator.

As we continue planning for 2011-12 school year, we will focus on programs and services that are academically-based, student-focused & cost effective.

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And we will continue ensuring

- that the bar for SWD continues to remain high;
- that low expectations from staff are unacceptable,
- site ownership of special education continues,
- on-going assessment data to guide instruction,
- delivering standards based instruction using core curriculum,
- Collaborative Leadership
- on-going – & relevant - Professional Development for OSE staff & administrators, teachers – both general education and special education,
- professional development for paraprofessionals,
- and training for parents on relevant topics

The mission of OSE has been and will continue to be:

- To ensure the academic advancement and physical and emotional health of students by:
 - Promoting the assurance that every student has equal access to all programs and activities in CUSD
 - Improving the achievement of students with disabilities through effective and innovative service delivery models which meet the needs of each individual.
 - Promoting high standards and expectations
 - Involving all educational stakeholders.