

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES
Governing Board of the Los Angeles Unified School District

THE MODIFIED CHANDA SMITH CONSENT DECREE
SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES

333 S. Beaudry Avenue, Board Room
3:30 p.m., Thursday, October 27, 2005

Board Members Present:

Mr. David Tokofsky, Chairperson
Ms. Julie Korenstein, Member
Mr. Jon Lauritzen

Staff Present:

Ms. Rowena Lagrosa, Deputy Superintendent
Ms. Donnalyn Jaque-Anton, Associate Superintendent, Division of Special Education
Ms. Deborah Hirsh, Chief Human Resources Officer
Mr. Peter Keup, Office of the General Counsel
Ms. Sharon Howell, Director of Professional Development, Least Restrictive Environment,
Division of Special Education
Dr. Randy Ross, Director of Educational Policy, Independent Analysis Unit
Dr. Jon Fullerton, Director of Budget and Financial Policy, Independent Analysis Unit

The meeting convened at 3:45 p.m.

Chairperson David Tokofsky opened the meeting by giving a description of the role the Board of Education plays in seeing that the Los Angeles Unified School District adhere to the Federal Court issued Chanda Smith Consent Decree. He introduced the other members of the Select Committee on the Modified Chanda Smith Consent Decree, Julie Korenstein and Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte, who was not in attendance.

STATUS ON THE NEW INDEPENDENT MONITOR – ITEM 1

Ms. Donnalyn Jaque-Anton introduced Mr. Peter Keup, who provided the Committee with the process the District uses to replace an Independent Monitor when they resign. He then gave a status report on the replacement of Mr. Carl Cohen, who is resigning as the Independent Monitor to become Superintendent of San Diego Unified School District.

INTRODUCTION OF PARENT ORGANIZATION CHAIRPERSONS – ITEM 2

Ms. Jaque-Anton introduced the Parent Organization Chairpersons, which included Community Advisory Council Chairperson Ms. Carla Vega; Special Education Multicultural Advisory Committee (SEMAC) Chairperson Ms. Carla Vega; Parents' Council Co-Chairs Ms. Sylvia Nena and Ms. Rosa Villegas.

MODIFIED CONSENT DECREE REVIEW – ITEM 3

Ms. Jaque-Anton gave an update on the *Modified* Chanda Smith Consent Decree. She noted that the decree is the same original decree with the exception that when it was renegotiated, it was modified by including 18 Outcome Areas, Disengagement Standards, a developed annual plan, and a process where this plan would be submitted, revised and approved annually by an independent monitor.

Ms. Jaque-Anton gave a summary on each of the 18 Outcomes the District has committed to achieving measurable outcomes within the modified decree this year. Ms. Anton stated that the 18 Outcome areas were objective and measurable, achievable by June 30, 2006, disengagement as Outcomes are achieved, and data driven. She stated that three Outcome achievement categories were high performance; mixed performance; low performance, and no data. Some of the group Outcomes were: #2-Performance in the Statewide Assessment Program; #3-Graduation Rate; #7-Placement of Students with Disabilities with all other Eligibilities; #11 Complaint Response Time; #14-Increased Parent Participation; #17-IEP Team Consideration of Special Factors – Behavioral Intervention, Strategies and Supports.

Ms. Jaque-Anton introduced the staff members that had been assigned to each Outcome commitment and each gave a report of their outcome achievements.

Ms. Sharyn Howell, Director of Professional Development and Least Restrictive Environment, Division of Special Education, assigned to Outcome 5—Reduction of Long-Term Suspensions, shared the achievements made in the reduction of Long-Term Suspensions. She listed some of the factors in the success: professional development in the classroom level; school wide positive support of students, administrators, teachers and parents; implementing alternatives to monitoring suspensions; and targeting schools that are really struggling.

Ms. Gloria Lopez, assigned to Outcome 7—Placement of Students with Disabilities (ages 6-22) With All Other Eligibilities, spoke on the challenges administrators had of breaking a culture of always placing disabled students in Special Education schools. A new Integration Program was created where students who cannot be fully included into the mainstream are integrated with their General Education peers. Also, professional development regarding a new curriculum for students with moderate-to-severe disabilities for students to work at the level the student can access was adopted and the District has made modifications for students in wheelchairs to be able to integrate into the General Education atmosphere.

Mr. Rene Gonzalez, assigned to Outcome 10—Timely Completion of Evaluations, spoke on actions designed to eliminate barriers in achieving evaluations and timely completions of IEPs (Individualized Education Program).

Ms. Deborah Hirsh, Outcome 16 – Increase in Qualified Providers (reducing the disparity in fully credentialed special education teachers and fully credentialed general education teachers from 10% to 3%) informed the Committee that the percent of highly qualified newly hired teachers and interns has increased from 27% to 83%. She reported that although there is a national shortage of Special Education teachers, the Los Angeles Unified School District has made tremendous progress in hiring. The District has acquired a new Federal grant of \$2.2 million to increase the number of teachers into special education.

Ms. Anton gave an update on Outcome 18 – Comprehensive Evaluation of African-American Identified as ED. She named actions designed to eliminate barriers: require that all schools document the interventions and provide information to assessors and IEP teams; development of required ED certification within Welligent IEP system; and require that all schools establish or maintain a process by which the needs of at risk students are addressed. Ms. Anton added that regular data reports would increase accountability as well as target assistance and support. Ms. Anton noted that a major change in the Chanda Smith Decree was the addition of the two data systems, the Welligent IEP system and the Decision Support System (DSS).

Ms. Anton and Mr. Gonzalez responded to questions and comments made by Committee Members and staff in attendance. Dr. Randy Ross inquired about the prospects of achieving the outcome areas. Chairperson Tokofsky noted that there were not any calendars of training or professional development provided in the report.

Discussion was held on the process used in making assessments. Ms. Anton showed slides from within the Snapshot of Outcomes tab in the Committee materials. She stated that the schools highlighted were still progressing but needed a push: Bell High School, testing students with disabilities; Murchison Elementary, models that are occurring and integrating with peers is low; Virginia Road Elementary, tested most of students but they have issues on suspension rates; Flournoy Elementary, some attitudes that have to be erased in terms of curriculum and high rate in suspensions; and Sepulveda Middle School, needs serious work on suspension rates. Ms. Anton emphasized that these schools are not being gauged as good or bad but have been given suggestions on how to achieve the necessary outcomes.

Ms. Aida Sneven, Principal and Ms. Penny Kennedy, special education teacher from Garvanza Elementary, spoke about what they believe makes their school successful. They work in teams, have goals, look at data and reevaluate what they do as a school. They provide a two-teacher model in the classroom, using a Special Education teacher and a General Education teacher in social studies and science classes. The key to the success of this collaborative model was being able to get time from the principal for grade-level planning and to get strategies to effectively work. Aida Sneven spoke on suspensions, the school discipline plan and interventions.

Dr. Althea Ford, Principal and Mr. Carlos Ponce, Assistant Principal, Beethoven Elementary School, spoke on the strategies used at Beethoven to insure success for their students. Dr. Ford stated that they have a common planning team, small learning communities, a strong arts program, one-to-one program with teachers and students, and a strong parental involvement. She added that special education teachers are held to the same accountability of general education teachers.

Ms. Linda Kaye, principal and Mr. Ramon Ponce, Assistant Principal, Bret Harte Middle School, spoke on the restructuring at their school to have grade-level houses. Ms. Kaye explained that an assistant principal and a counselor, which provide personalization and accountability, head each house. Intervention takes place where each student is classified as basic or below basic, and they are mainstreamed into the general education classrooms, working intensely on basic remedial reading skills.

Ms. Kaye reported that at Bret Harte they had developed a learning center with a classroom section as well as a learning lab with computers. Ms. Kaye informed the Committee that this school is an Urban Teacher Classroom Program (UTCP) school, working with students who have specific behavioral management needs in afternoon tutorial programs. Some of the other programs Ms. Kaye mentioned in her presentation were: suspension and intervention process; study teams and strategic outcomes. Mr. Ponce, spoke on programs for prevention, such as Beyond the Bell, the Required Learning Academy, and teachers providing after-school tutoring.

Ms. Joann Acunes, Principal, Madison Middle School, spoke on the programs at her school used to bring up its proficiency. They have secured a grant and brought in life skills facilitators trained to work with young people for an in-house prevention program. One of the outcomes that have not been met is the IEP evaluation.

Mr. Mark Browning, Principal, San Antonio Elementary School, told how his past experience as an APIS assisted him in his current role as principal. Mr. Browning provided the Committee with his school's strategies used to obtain success. He reported that they worked on team building, teacher training, and targeted professional development using all teachers to identify grade level competencies for students. He also reported that the Welligent data system was a very important asset in making student assessments. The school made their benchmark in areas of reading in fluency, by using detention time to work with students. Keeping students in mainstream was a major goal for San Antonio Elementary School.

Ms. Anton responded to questions made by the Committee.

SPEAKERS

Pierre Landry, Member, Parents Council, spoke on requesting an extension to the decree.

Cathy Turkell, LACES Parent Council, requested an immediate widespread system reform.

Linda Landry, parent of a special education student, presented a list of parent involvement needs.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Sonja Lucheni, parent of an autism student, complained of parents not receiving special education information and flyers.

Beatriz Quiroz, parent of a student with cerebral palsy, spoke on school problems vs. student's abilities.

Carla Vega, parent of a 15 year-old student at Fremont High School, spoke on parents, teachers and administrators being trained to assist disabled students in graduating.

Aniceto Reyes, parent of a student at a special education center, shared several experiences he has had with his son and the responses of the inexperienced administrators of special education students.

The meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.
