



Agenda Item Details

Meeting	Dec 10, 2019 - Regular Board Meeting
Category	5. Reports
Subject	H. Special Education: Reviewing and Expanding Continuum of Services
Type	Reports
Goals	Special Education & Inclusion

To: Dr. Donald B. Austin, Superintendent of Schools

From: Ms. Sharon Ofek, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services – Secondary
 Ms. Anne Brown, Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services – Elementary
 Ms. Cynthia Loleng-Perez, Director, Special Education – Secondary
 Dr. Jennifer Baker, Director, Special Education – Elementary

RECOMMENDATION

This item is for information only. No action is required.

BACKGROUND

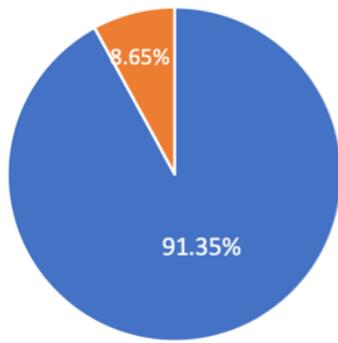
The move of Special Education to the Educational Services Division, as well as the hiring of new Elementary and Secondary Special Education Directors, provided an opportunity to review the current state of Palo Alto Unified School District's (PAUSD's) continuum of services. The Special Education Department has been analyzing available resources and how they are being used. This report provides current thinking on improvements to implement that will result in an expansion of services available to Special Education students.

Nonpublic Schools

Currently, there are 103 students placed outside PAUSD, through the IEP process or through settlement agreements, at a total cost of \$5.9 million. Outside placements result when one of three situations occur:

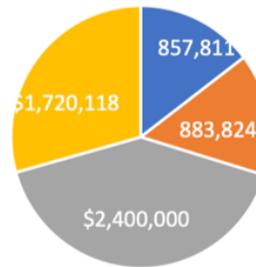
1. Programs to support students are not available in PAUSD
2. Parents elect to place students in private schools (unilateral placement)
3. IEP team recommendations due to:
 - Insufficient therapeutic programs and resources to support students social/emotional and academic needs
 - Insufficient behavior support for students with intensive behavioral needs
 - Students who are unable to handle a large comprehensive school setting, and needing 1:1 teaching, or a smaller school environment
 - Students who need multi-sensory instruction above and beyond what is currently provided in PAUSD

Outside placements



- Number of students with IEP in PAUSD- 1191 students
- Number of students with IEP in outside placements- 103 student

Cost of Outside Placements



- Settlement Agreement- Independent Study/1:1 Teaching
- Settlement Agreement- NPS/Private Placement
- NPS through IEP Process
- Other placements

While some of these outside placements are a result of gaps in PAUSD’s continuum of service, with meticulous and thoughtful planning, we will be able to develop programs internally that would address a greater variety of student needs.

After an in-depth analysis of current students’ support needs, the following options are being explored:

K-2 and 3-5 Moderate/Severe Learning Programs

Currently, our moderate/severe learning centers serve students in grades K through 5 in one classroom. A K-5 classroom necessitates that one education specialist serves students by modifying and teaching the curriculum and supporting students’ social skills for all K-5 students. By reconfiguring our single K-5 moderate/severe learning centers into two classrooms (K-2 and 3-5) at a given site, education specialists will be able to specialize supports for three grade levels, as opposed to six. Not only will this provide students with a more appropriate age span of classmates, but it will also be an opportunity to provide increased time for collaboration between the general and special education teachers.

School Refusal Team

A School Refusal Team, comprised of a mental health therapist, a behaviorist, a credentialed teacher (home instruction), a school psychologist, and a school site representative will be assembled. This team will support students, within their existing placement, who are refusing to attend school due to a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, high anxiety, behavioral concerns, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), depression, etc.

1:1 Teaching Program

PAUSD provides personalized learning for students from grades 6 through 12. The curriculum is delivered through both 1:1 individual or group direct instruction, and on-line guided independent study. Students receiving special and general education support will be served through this program and can receive instruction in both settings. Development of this program is in its infancy, however, a variety of approaches, ranging from creating an in-house program to contracting with an online platform, are being considered.

Students receive a customized educational experience tailored to their unique needs. Student attendance will be based on personalized schedules that reflect their distinct strengths, needs, and learning preferences. Per course, students will attend school in person a minimum of once per week for one hour of instruction with their teacher. Students will be expected to spend a minimum of one additional hour on academic work, per course, per week.

The nature of this planned hybrid program gives students the opportunity to personalize their instruction and the freedom to utilize resources and activities to create a flexible educational experience. While enrolled in the program, students will be able to take courses concurrently at their neighborhood schools.

Intensive Therapeutic Program

The Intensive Therapeutic Program is designed to successfully address mental health, emotional, and behavioral issues that create a barrier to effective learning. An Education Specialist and Mental Health Therapist work together to provide therapeutic activities, including individual and group therapy, behavior management, crisis intervention, and family therapy, as needed. Students learn to make connections between thoughts,

feelings and behaviors. They also learn to use coping techniques, such as positive self-talk, self-calming strategies, visualization, and deep breathing to change negative thought patterns.

Students in this 6-12th grade program will be those whose serious mental health, behavioral and emotional difficulties, have resulted in significant functional impairments in major life activities. Often, these difficulties have become increasingly disabling over time, requiring frequent, supportive, and intensive interventions. Students' abilities to participate on a comprehensive school site, without intensive interventions, have been seriously compromised, resulting in difficulty with interpersonal relationships, and requiring recurrent interventions. Students with special education eligibility of Emotional Disturbance or Other Health Impairment would qualify for this program.

Intensive Behavioral Program

This program will serve students who require a more structured environment than is found in a traditional classroom setting. The IEP team will refer students to a short-term support group to work on stabilizing high intensity behaviors, while learning appropriate replacement behaviors related to their IEP goals. The purpose of this short-term program will be to provide students with behavioral skills needed to re-integrate into their regular classroom setting. The program will simultaneously provide training and strategies to classroom teachers and staff, utilizing evidence-based methodologies, including those available through the National Autism Center.

Each student in the Intensive Behavioral Program will have a Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA) and a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Behavior data will be collected and analyzed weekly. Students will receive specially designed instruction and group arrangements to facilitate progress, in anticipation of transitions to inclusive settings, ongoing assessment of skills to aid in goal setting, and extensive utilization of technology to facilitate learning. Depending on the severity of the student's behavior, students will begin reintegration into the classroom after demonstrating stable behaviors and the ability to utilize the strategies taught. Behavior support staff will transition with the student for a period of time.

These programs edify the Special Education Department's interest in providing students with appropriate support through earlier interventions, enabling them to have successful learning experiences on PAUSD campuses.

[20191210SpEdOutsidePlacementsCostGraph.png \(61 KB\)](#)

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