

# Special Education: A Top Priority

Report to the ACUSD Board of Trustees

By Dr. Amy Slavensky, Superintendent

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## Agenda

- Key Ideas
- Where We are Today
- Where We are Going
- A Special Education Study Team: Why?
- A Special Education Study Team: How?
- Funding this Essential Work
- Discussion & Questions

## Our Mission

*Enriched by the diversity and deep traditions of our unique community, Amador County Public Schools will **prepare, support, and inspire** each student to achieve career and college success in a rapidly evolving world through highly engaging teaching, rigorous learning and innovative pathways supported by strong partnerships in a **safe, caring, and collaborative environment**.*

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## Key Ideas

- Equitable access to standards-aligned, core instruction within the least restrictive learning environment for all students is a priority.
- All students who reside in Amador County are students of the school district first.
- Students may become enrolled in a county office of education program/school based on eligibility or need.

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## Where we are today ...

- Economic uncertainties continue.
- All employees who serve our ACUSD students with disabilities are currently employed by the ACOE.
- The Amador County Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA) and related Administrative Unit reside with the ACOE.
- Over 600 ACUSD students are students with disabilities served by ACOE employees.
- There is a need to explore options to ensure all students with disabilities continue to receive the necessary support and services to meet their educational needs, per law and their IEPs.

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## Where we are today ...

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Interim Budget Reports reflect progress and still work to do.
- CDE fiscal advisor/expert Ms. Protine, Dr. Russell and Mr. Critchfield determined that all reductions to the ACOE budget that could be made, outside of those related to Special Education services, have been made.

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## Where we are today ...

- Ms. Protine and the April 29, 2019 FCMAT Report recommend that ACUSD and ACOE explore all solutions
  - “... consider arranging for a special education study to evaluate potential savings and/or restructuring of service delivery models.”
- There is no comparison in the state to gauge success in delivery of services and fiscal management
  - No other single district county operates their own SELPA
  - No other county operates 100% of Special Education services for the district(s)

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## Where we are going ...

- For any potential program changes, we will continue to use a collaborative approach.
  - Procedures for Academic Program Change
- Recommendations will come from a collaborative group of representatives.
  - SEAC, ACTA and CSEA leaders
  - Other teachers and staff
  - Principals and other leaders
  - Parents and secondary school students
- Special Education programming will remain as it is for this school year.

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## Where we are going ...

- The ACOE SELPA Director/Assistant Superintendent of Special Education position became vacant as of July 19, 2019.
- The ACUSD Director of Special Education position is not a duplicated position, and it is a cost savings solution for ACOE.
- One option to explore is the potential transfer of Special Education Program from the ACOE to ACUSD jurisdiction, to be effective July 1, 2020.
  - The Administrative Unit (AU)
  - The Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

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## A Special Education Study Team: Why?

- To explore all options
  - To ensure ongoing, quality services for all students
  - To ensure fiscal health
- Additional Information:
- Dr. Slavensky and Dr. Russell met with ACTA, SEAC, and CSEA leaders on June 26, 2019 to discuss a fiscal issue.
  - During this meeting, the idea of a Special Education Study Team consisting of many stakeholders to work together to understand our current reality, explore options, and make a recommendation to the Board was also discussed.
  - On July 17, 2019 and August 6, 2019, the Board had special study sessions to study related information.

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## A Special Education Study Team: How?

### External facilitator support including:

- Large, diverse group facilitation to build our capacity and ability to work together
  - Potentially challenging subject matter and project
  - Diverse perspectives and opinions
- Experienced facilitators of broad-based stakeholder groups who can provide this training and support
- Use of communication and collaboration strategies to assist the team

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## A Special Education Study Team: How?

### The Study Team Process:

1. Convene the team.
2. Facilitators to conduct 1:1 interviews of each team member.
3. Facilitators to understand the information from interviews as the foundation for the teamwork and facilitation.
4. 5 full-day sessions (September through January)
  - Learn and practice skills for communication & collaboration
  - Have dialogue about the past that got us here and our present reality
  - Explore and research options for the future
  - Make agreements and recommendation to the Board of Trustees

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## A Special Education Study Team: How?

At the same time, other work is happening:

- Personnel, labor relations, and negotiations planning
- Fiscal research and planning
- SELPA learning and planning
- Preparing and providing Board reports and written updates
- Logistics and communication to all stakeholders

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Discussion & Questions

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## A Special Education Study Team: How?

- Beth Farb and Nina Mancina, experienced in large, diverse group facilitation to achieve a common goal and outcome for the benefit of all students and the school community
  - Very experienced facilitators of diverse, broad-based stakeholder groups who can provide training and support
  - Use of communication and collaboration strategies to assist the team
  - Networking in public school education over many years yields a variety of colleagues who can serve as a resource in time of need
- Maureen Burness, an experienced Special Education educator and technical assistance facilitator with CDE's Office of Special Education's State Performance Plan Technical Assistance Project (SPS-TAP)
  - Technical assistance
  - Compliance with Ed Code, SELPA Plan, and other laws

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## Funding this Essential Work

- Funds that are currently budgeted as part of the Superintendent's annual budget
- Part of the Board approved/adopted budget
- Funds will not be spent on other activities as this is the 2019-20 priority

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