

Meeting Date: April 21, 2021
Chairperson's Name: Lisa Mosko

Meetings/Trainings attended:

04/12/2021 By Laws Ad Hoc Committee

04/12/2021 Parent Ambassadors Working Group

03/25/2021 CAC Presentation to the LAUSD Board Special Education Committee

Dear Members & Public:

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about leadership. It's been an important topic for me since I was tasked lead the CAC. All around me, I see leaders in special education advocacy who contribute in their communities in such meaningful ways.

So, bear with me, as I consider exactly what strong leadership should look like. Is great leadership about active listening, building consensus, and challenging decision makers to do better all while giving them grace and the space to do so? Or is it about being the loudest voice in the room, and encouraging others to demonize certain individuals with the idea of completely vanquishing them, without verifying whether or not there is an actual factual basis for the attack?

I think we all know the answer.

As I lean deeper and deeper into advocacy work around special education, I'm troubled by how many factions I see digging in their heels, and refusing to work with one another. Sometimes, we see different groups operating on a foundation of misinformation. It is for this reason, that I would like to clear up some confusion in our broader LAUSD community around the function of the CAC. We have many passionate advocates coming to our meetings and wondering why they don't have a vote during the the CAC meetings. The answer is: California state law. California state law says that every Special Education Local Planning Area (SELPA) will have a Community Advisory Committee for Special Education. State law says that members are appointed by that SELPA's Board of Education. The process that LAUSD has created to select members has been largely led by the Office of Parent and Community Services, who have created a double blind process to select candidates to present to the LAUSD School Board to be approved. According to state law, the majority of members are parents of students with IEPs in LAUSD, and other key stakeholder groups are also represented, such as grown ups with disabilities, general education teachers, special education teachers, LAUSD administrators, community partners, etc. The committee meets monthly, and according to state law, advises the LAUSD School Board on various issues pertaining to special education.

One key distinction I'd like to make is that, according to state law, this is a *committee* meeting and not a town hall. By definition, a committee is:

“a group of people appointed for a specific function, typically consisting of members of a larger group.”

Our committee meetings, while public, are not town halls, where everyone can participate. It would not be possible to act as a “committee” and carry out our specific function, which is to advise on the Special Education Local Plan, if every one of the CAC meetings allowed for non-committee members to actively comment and contribute throughout the course of the meeting.

That said, we as a committee take our role representing stakeholders of students with (dis)abilities in LAUSD very seriously, and want to hear from those of you advocates who may not be members of the CAC. For this reason, we offer public comment. I have also regularly offered my email address in the past, and offer it again here: moskolisacac@gmail.com. You may also connect with the Office of Parent and Community Services through their email address, which they have regularly made public: families@lausd.net.

For those of you who are not yet members of the CAC and who are key stakeholders in special education with the time and the passion to actively contribute as a member, I encourage you to apply. The application window is open until April 23, 2021, and the link to apply may be found here:

(English): <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/domain/577/cac/CAC%20Application%20FINAL%20English%202018.pdf>

(Español): <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/577/New%20CAC%20MEMBERSHIP%20APPLICATION%20%20Spanish%202021.pdf>

And to everyone, I urge you to join me in continuing think about what strong leadership looks like. When I think of the world’s most inspiring leaders, I think of the ones who held their oppressors accountable and managed to do it in a way that actually compelled those oppressors work with them and ultimately, thank them for their leadership. I think of César Chavez, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. I hope that we can all lean into this kind of leadership, because if we don’t, guess who loses? The kids. Everyone - let’s be the “adults” in the room. Let’s model the behavior that we teach our kids to practice. Let’s work together. If there is something we disagree on, we should take it as an opportunity to learn more from the other side, and work through the problem to try and reach a new consensus. In some instances, we may have to agree to disagree, and focus on where we can build bridges and get meaningful work done. But no matter what, let’s keep leaning into positive leadership so that we can collectively lift our children up to meet their full potential.

Sincerely,

Lisa Mosko