



**North Coastal Consortium for Special Education
COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2015-2016 ANNUAL PRIORITIES REPORT**



It is the intent of the CAC, through the Priorities Report and its other activities, to support the Mission Statement of the NCCSE and the NCCSE member school districts.

NCCSE MISSION STATEMENT

The North Coastal Consortium for Special Education (NCCSE) is a dynamic, regional, collaborative special education local planning area whose purpose is to support local school districts as they provide for the needs of students who receive special education services. The NCCSE provides and supports districts with

- Staff development activities and parent education
- Program specialist services
- Help when responding to needs of parents of students who receive special education services
- Creating forums for problem solving
- Helping to identify unique needs within local school districts
- Legal and technical assistance
- Awareness and dissemination of current best practices
- Unification of common needs

2015-2016 COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

In its advisory role to the policy makers of NCCSE, the CAC recognizes that there will continue to be broad issues deserving particular attention in the provision of special education services. The Summary of Recommendations on Page Two reflects these broad issues, which are expanded on succeeding pages with examples of current exemplary practices as well as with recommendations for practices the CAC hopes to see incorporated in educational planning for the coming year.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1. Academic and Social Inclusion**
- 2. Communication/Access to Information**
- 3. Self- Advocacy**

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Priorities and sub-categories are listed in order of importance as determined by stakeholder groups (students, families, staff, and directors). Student input is listed in right-hand columns in *italics*.

PRIORITY ONE: ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

- Every student is a general education student first. Promote the successful academic and social inclusion of all students with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, within the whole school community.
- Ensure that students are safe in all settings, including classrooms and at unstructured times.
- Research indicates that all learning occurs in the context of relationships. When social inclusion happens, students' ability to learn academically is also enhanced.

1.1 General – administrative support, information for families, collaboration among general and special educators

1.2 Access to academic inclusion

1.3 Access to social inclusion

1.4 Professional development for inclusive education

1.5 Professional development for assistive technology

1.6 School-wide and personal safety

PRIORITY TWO: COMMUNICATION/ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

- Continue to increase communication and collaboration among the NCCSE, school districts, the CAC and families with the purpose of building trusting partnerships and increasing meaningful participation that supports students.
- Diminish barriers for families and students whose primary language is other than English to enable meaningful and informed participation in their education and IEP process.
- Districts to appoint CAC members who reflect the diversity of families within the district.

2.1 Transition practices

2.2 Ability Awareness

2.3 District-home communication

2.4 CAC representation on appropriate district committees

PRIORITY THREE: SELF-ADVOCACY

- Support the life-long success, independence, and leadership skills of students who receive special education services by explicitly teaching how to self-advocate, along with providing opportunities to practice self-advocacy skills at all age levels.

3.1 Meaningful student participation in educational planning meetings, on CAC, and in leadership positions on school sites

3.2 Professional development for self advocacy

3.3 Utilize person-centered planning processes to inform the IEP process

PRIORITY ONE: ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Every student is a general education student first. Promote the successful academic and social inclusion of all students with disabilities, including those with significant disabilities, within the whole school community. Ensure that students are safe while in all settings, including classrooms and unstructured times

- Social and academic inclusion are not exclusive occurrences – when students are included socially in general education classrooms and campus activities, both social and academic learning are enhanced.
- **.Note: Inclusive education was overwhelmingly chosen as the most important CAC priority by students, CAC representatives and directors, garnering almost as many votes as the other priorities combined.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Districts/NCCSE/CAC	EXAMPLES OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES that support academic and social inclusion
1.1 General	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide guidelines for parents to understand inclusive education options within each district• Site administrators are involved in trainings and show leadership in this area• Special and general education teachers collaborate at district and site level• Student voices:• <i>Treat us like our own age – not like we’re younger or less capable because we have disabilities. We need support, not to do it for us. Give respectful support. Know who we are.</i>• <i>There need to be more special education services in more places for students with disabilities who are at grade level – so kids don’t have to fail at so many different places before they find a place that works for them.</i>• <i>Realize that good grades don’t mean you don’t need services.</i>• <i>Give us classes we need for future jobs.</i>• <i>Use technology instead of textbooks – more technology based classes.</i>• <i>It’s hard to listen in large groups.</i>• <i>There should be options to listen to music.</i>• <i>We can fail classes and still move on – not held accountable in middle school.</i>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Districts/NCCSE/CAC	EXAMPLES OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES that support academic and social inclusion
1.2 Access to academic inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborated with special education/general education/administration to strategically schedule mainstreaming • Creating staffing to increase team taught classes and decrease special day class placements • All students with mild to moderate disabilities are on general education rosters at their neighborhood schools • Elective peer mentor class • Infuse general education classes with special education instructional strategies • Students who receive learning center supports start their day in general education classes • Classes co-taught by general and special education teachers • Universal Design for Learning being trained and implemented • ELA (English Language Acquisition) curriculum includes a modified version to support differentiated instruction and maximizing access to general education • Student voices: • <i>It worked because they made me work hard.</i> • <i>Give us more time to finish tests and classroom tasks.</i> • <i>I'd like to get extra help with whatever we've learned, individual tutoring.</i> • <i>General education teachers to give visuals and/or repeat instructions so students understand what is expected.</i> • <i>Hands-on experiences, visuals, colors, pictures and not just talking instruction.</i> • <i>Systems in place to let students know either without words or privately if the teacher is not happy with your behavior or participation. Don't call out student in front of the class.</i> • <i>Be willing to be flexible and individualize – don't insist on one way for all students (e.g. some students do better using fill-in-the-blank notes but for some students that is an obstacle – they do better taking their own notes).</i>

<p style="text-align: center;">RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Districts/NCCSE/CAC</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">EXAMPLES OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES that support academic and social inclusion</p>
<p>1.3 Access to Social Inclusion</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include students in special day classes in field trips and other activities their general education peers participate in • Circle of Friends curriculum being implemented at all age levels (each student has numerous peer friends) • Structured social supports at lunch (lunch bunch, video club, etc.) • Structured opportunities for ‘peer buddy’ interactions and adult-facilitated social activities • Student voices: • <i>Don’t have adults assign peers to be your friend after elementary school. It’s awkward and not age appropriate to have adults tell you to be friends.</i> • <i>One-to-one social mentoring is really helpful for some students.</i>
<p>1.4 Professional Development for Inclusive Education Create opportunities for families and staff to develop expertise in supporting students with disabilities in general education settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-teaching training and practices being incorporated and supported by staff and families in many districts • Secured grant to further co-teaching trainings • Developing a special education web page, including resources • Paraprofessionals attended trainings on general education topics so they are able to successfully support students in general education classroom • Special education staff are included in all CCSS (Common Core State Standards) curriculum development • Workshop follow up, with accountability to implement inclusive education practices • Time for general and special education teachers to plan together • Opportunities for staff to observe other classes/schools implementing inclusive strategies • Universal Design for Learning being trained and implemented

<p align="center">RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Districts/NCCSE/CAC</p>	<p align="center">EXAMPLES OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES that support academic and social inclusion</p>
<p>1.5 Professional Development for Assistive Technology Increase awareness of, access to and implementation of assistive technology for staff, families, and students in the areas of communication and instruction. Increase integration of assistive technology throughout the SELPA, districts and schools at every level - for meetings and professional development as well as to address student needs</p>	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCCSE and district Assistive Technology Specialists support assessment and utilization of individualized tools and software/apps • Inservice for special education staff by NCCSE AT staff • NCCSE Assistive Technology Conference during the summer <p>Specific tools/curricula:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video modeling being utilized as an instructional strategy • All classes for students with moderate to significant disabilities have been provided with touch screens, Intellitools, and software. • Use of individualized assistive technology tools and software/apps • NCCSE utilizing Haiku software for communication among PLCs, program specialists and governance boards
<p>1.6 School-wide and personal safety</p>	<p>School safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-wide anti-bullying programs • Safe school plan • Student voices: • <i>Anti-bullying assemblies are not enough – have a percentage of the cooler kids be student advocates, who can stop bullying as it’s happening. (Note: research bears this out: it is effective for by-standers to speak up and socially isolate those bullying.)</i> • <i>At middle school the different grade levels each had a separate lunch time and were assigned to sit by class. This helped people to know each other better and removed opportunities for older kids to bully younger ones.</i> <p>Personal safety:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social relationships/sex education at upper elementary, middle, high and transition levels • NCCSE developed a list of puberty/hygiene/relationship curricula and parent guides and distributed to school district directors • Above parent guides also available to parents through CAC

PRIORITY TWO: COMMUNICATION/ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- Continue to increase communication and collaboration among the NCCSE, school districts, the CAC and families with the purpose of building trusting partnerships and increasing meaningful participation that support students.
- Diminish barriers for families and students whose primary language is other than English to enable meaningful and informed participation in their child’s education and IEP process.
- Districts to appoint CAC members who reflect the diversity of families within the district.

<p align="center">RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Districts/NCCSE/CAC</p>	<p align="center">EXAMPLES OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES that support communication/access to information</p>
<p>2.1 Provide information on transition practices for parents and students as they transition from level to level.</p> <p>Schedule activities as soon as possible after the winter holiday break.</p>	<p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At transition meetings, discuss what successful social supports will be available at the new school site
	<p>Infant to Preschool Transitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two full-day trainings on conducting family assessments and developing family outcomes • Three trainings on parent coaching • Parent guides on Early Start transition and on preschool services in English and Spanish are available on NCCSE, HOPE, Regional Center and EFRC websites
	<p>Kindergarten Transitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational meeting for parents of children going to Kindergarten • Students to visit new campus/classroom(s) and meet teachers before the school year starts

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Districts/NCCSE/CAC	EXAMPLES OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES that support communication/access to information
	<p>Middle and High School Transitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public informational meetings for special education parents in the year prior to transition • Information for special education parents at open house and back to school night • Collaboration among teachers/directors from feeder districts and high school district • Before school year starts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide student schedule ○ Become familiar with new campus ○ Meet special education teacher • Information re: diploma v. certificate bound status and implications at all 8th grade transition meetings • Training on transition to adult services for staff, students and parents beginning at or before age of 16 • Student is involved in crafting ITP goals that are meaningful to them • Student voices: • <i>Opportunity to attend high school on a regular basis for a few hours a day at least during the last month of middle school if not more. (Also a good idea for entering middle school from elementary school?)</i> • <i>Would help to have a junior or senior mentor for incoming freshmen.</i> • <i>Students should know that middle school grades and the classes are important – they determine what classes you can take in high school and also then what universities you can attend.</i> • <i>Knowing which classes count toward graduation.</i> • <i>Students should believe teachers when they say that high school is harder.</i>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Districts/NCCSE/CAC	EXAMPLES OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES that support communication/access to information
	<p>Post-secondary transition services/adult life:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition workshop and resource fair at NCCSE • All seniors to tour local community colleges • Meetings with Department of Rehabilitation • San Diego Regional Center to be involved in ITPs • Student is involved in crafting ITP goals that are meaningful to them • Student Voices: • <i>Students asked for adults with the same disability as theirs to speak with them about their experiences after leaving school.</i> • <i>Knowing the teacher and community safety rules.</i> • Ideas for weekend classes: • <i>Getting a driver's license</i> • <i>Scheduling appointments</i> • <i>Ordering take out</i> • <i>Basic baking and cooking classes</i> • <i>Independent living</i> • <i>Basic computer classes</i>
<p>2.2 Ability Awareness Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several districts developed and/or extended Ability Awareness activities to new school sites • School sites developed their own activities to meet their individual needs: Guest speakers, lesson plans, art contests, morning school wide announcements, in class presentations, library holdings and displays, school wide broadcasts, random acts of kindness • Sharing of emerging Ability Awareness activities at Professional Learning Community meetings. • Created school site PTA position for special education parent • Ability awareness lesson plans are available at the district teacher resource lab and on Sharepoint (district online teacher resource) • Student voices: • <i>Students in SEAS class asked for ability awareness 'so people could understand.'</i>

<p align="center">RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Districts/NCCSE/CAC</p>	<p align="center">EXAMPLES OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES that support communication/access to information</p>
<p>2.3 Continue to improve district-home communication about family education opportunities and available services and resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage family members to attend CAC and district parent events • ABCs of IEPs and other family workshops, NCCSE and district professional development workshops as appropriate • District level dissemination of the above (e.g., all-calls, emails, flyers in back packs, school newsletters and websites, etc.) 	<p>General:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making professional language parent and student friendly • Making follow up calls after initial IEP meetings • District staff providing parent workshops on behavior, specific curricula utilized in the district, etc. <p>CAC/district/special education information distributed within districts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing all calls • Developed email list of district special education parents • Posting workshop flyers throughout school sites (e.g. teacher lounges) • Special education parent sections of district and school websites • NCCSE CAC link easily reached on district and school websites • Special education staff meetings • Informational brochures and guides • Welcome packets for parents new to special education • “Coffee with the director” meetings • Parent surveys • Forwarding emails to PTA presidents and teachers for distribution • CAC representatives <p>CAC/special education information distributed throughout NCCSE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Letter in August/September • CAC email newsletter to parents, teachers, administrators, agencies • CAC meetings are videotaped and posted on NCCSE website • Print out at each IEP meeting that includes opt-in email registration • Family portion of NCCSE website revised • Hotline of upcoming workshops/events in English and Spanish <p>CAC Spanish language supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All CAC meetings and parent workshops include Spanish interpretation • CAC meetings videotaped in Spanish and posted on website • Hotline of upcoming workshops/events in Spanish • CAC materials in English and Spanish • NCCSE bilingual phone support • Family portion of NCCSE website in Spanish

	<p>Consider parent resource rooms for special education information and opportunities to connect with other parents and CAC representatives</p> <p>Ideas for Welcome Packets for Families New to Special Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Vision Statement • Special education department organization chart, with contact information for key personnel • Special education and other services available within the district • Contact information for NCCSE website and parent liaison • NCCSE handout: 'Suggested Options for Resolving Individual Concerns' • List of FAQs specific to each district • List of family related community resources • Calendar/flyers of upcoming district events (e.g. back to school nights, transition information meetings, social events) • Feedback forms
<p>2.4 CAC staff and parent representation on appropriate district committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Districts to identify appropriate district and site-level committees (e.g. district and site councils and committees) and appoint CAC staff and parent representatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A school site level PTA special education parent representative position created at each school site • CAC staff and parent representatives are members of the superintendent's parent advisory committee • Within-district meetings of directors and CAC representatives for individual district work on chosen CAC priority goals

PRIORITY THREE: SELF-ADVOCACY

Support the life-long success, independence, and leadership skills of students who receive special education services by explicitly teaching how to self-advocate, along with providing opportunities to practice self-advocacy skills at all age levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR Districts/NCCSE/CAC	EXAMPLES OF CURRENT AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES that support self-advocacy
<p>3.1 Support the development of meaningful student participation for self-advocacy and leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purposeful student participation at meetings related to the student’s education at all age levels.• Encourage student participation and representation on Community Advisory Committee.• Support student leadership on campus (e.g., student government, service learning, etc.)	<p>Student participation in IEP meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• High school students prepared for and directly participating in their IEP meetings• Middle school and elementary school students participating in their meetings• Back to school presentations on self-advocacy, self-determination and self-led IEPs at high school and transition classes• Specific IEP goals for student participation in IEP meetings• Utilize I’m Determined website (www.imdetermined.org)• Using alternative methods of communication as appropriate for students to share their interests and ideas• Student voices re: attending their IEP meetings:• <i>Students want to have a voice in their own meetings.</i>• Likes:• <i>Good to be part of the meeting, say what you want, have parents attend and know what you’re doing.</i>• <i>Helps to stay on track, feel supported, seeing how much I’ve grown, feel like I have a purpose, plan for next year, and hear all the different perspectives, hearing good things about yourself.</i>• <i>Knowing where you need help and where you’re doing well.</i>• Dislikes:• <i>Would have been good if I had the opportunity to speak.</i>• <i>If parents had let me make my own choices.</i>• <i>Being made to keep a service if a student doesn’t want it.</i>• <i>Needed teachers not attending, bringing up negative history, talking about personal items that are not related to goals, not knowing there’s a problem until the meeting, being bored, going over things we already know, make sure goals are relevant.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bring in the teachers where we're doing well, not just the teachers where we are struggling.</i> • <i>Opportunity to at least meet and preferably to get to know the people who will attend at least a week or two before the meeting.</i> • <i>What helps? – set goals, rehearse, and prioritize what's important with the teacher before the IEP meeting.</i> • <i>As few people as possible.</i> • <i>Rooms with enough space – not crowded.</i> • <i>Stay on task – no side conversations or eating during the meeting.</i> • <i>What is on paper is not the whole picture of the student – they are really different and much more together and capable than their IEPs and other paperwork makes them out to be.</i> • <i>It is impossible to convey some kinds of important progress on paper.</i> <p>Student participation on Community Advisory Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students presenting at CAC meetings • Student input on CAC Priorities Report expanded to many more students this year
<p>3.2 Professional Development for Self Advocacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define necessary skills needed for effective self-advocacy. • Provide workshops on effective self-advocacy for staff, parents, students and administrators • Include qualified individuals with disabilities as presenters • CAC to distribute information about self advocacy practices and workshops throughout SELPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff meeting time used for teachers to share and create new self-advocacy curriculum/activities • Developing resource links for teachers re: self-advocacy at all age levels • Three staff became trainers this year for the California Transition Alliance • Developing one-page self advocacy resource to hand out at IEP meetings • I'm Determined website being utilized by elementary, middle and high school teachers (www.imdetermined.org – Virginia Department of Education)
<p>3.3 Utilize person-centered planning processes (e.g., Pathways, MAPs, and PATHs) with students and families to inform the IEP process and to help build self-advocacy skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAPs meetings facilitated for specific purposes as needed/requested • Three year planning document in use

PROCESS

The NCCSE Community Advisory Committee collected input for the priorities by survey and dialog between NCCSE Directors of Special Education, CAC representatives and students. Common, recurring themes were identified, discussed by the CAC membership, and are presented in this document.

It is the intent of the Community Advisory Committee that the Board of Governors will take these recommendations under advisement as programs and services are developed for the upcoming year.



Eric Lendvai
Community Advisory Committee Chairperson

June 8, 2015
Date