

Special Education Integration: Overcoming Challenges to Inclusive Siting

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Presented By:

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Welcome & Overview: What is Special Education Integration?

Jema Estrella
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Objectives

- Build upon last year’s workshop on universal design.
- Explore ways to address special education siting issues and house students with special needs.
- Review current policy issues and challenges to integrated, inclusive siting.
- Consider the interaction between integration efforts and Proposition 51 and inherent opportunities.

County School Facilities Consortium (CSFC)

- Formed in 1993 to support state funding for county-operated school facilities.
- Diverse group of 26 COEs representing counties of all sizes throughout California.
- Mission Statement
CSFC advocates for quality school facilities for all students by focusing on flexibility in California’s school facility funding program, promoting equal access to funding for county offices of education, and engaging on legislative and regulatory issues.

CSFC Advocacy Efforts

Optimizing integration is a key element of CSFC's 2016-17 goals:

- Advocate for and educate policymakers on improvements that will optimize integration of special education facilities, in order to serve students in their Least Restrictive Environment. Promote the use of universal design features."

(CSFC 2016-17 Goals and Priorities)

What is SPED Integration?



- We know... **ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL**
- When facilities are adequate and inclusive
- When we remove barriers
- When we create adequate learning environments for everyone including students with special needs
- When we provide integration for students and staff with special needs and they are fully embraced as part of the school community
- When facilities provide options for everyone, regardless of facility ownership or management responsibility (District or COE)

Why Does it
Matter?

Because it's all about students!
Because SPED changes lives!

Context

- TODAY, we will review policy issues, challenges, and solutions to SPED

SPED
Financing
Discussions

Governor's Budget Proposal 2017-18:

- The Governor proposes to engage stakeholders throughout the spring budget process for feedback on California's special education finance system
- References findings from two recent reports:
 - California Statewide Special Education Task Force (2015)
 - Public Policy Institute of California (2016)

SPED
Financing
Discussions

- There may be an impact to small districts and SELPAs
- Report on [Special Education Finance in California](#) by Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) issued on Nov 2016
 - Examines California's special education finance system in light of the principles that underlie LCFF—local control and accountability, transparency, and equity
 - May result in policy changes
 - May change who receives funding for SPED
 - May provide \$ to districts (not SELPAs)

SPED Financing Discussions

- What's the impact?
- Trend of SELPAs moving away from county offices to districts.
- Transfer of facilities may be necessary..
- If SELPA is not there to manage SPED, it will be someone else's task, typically the local district.
- **The responsibility to educate students remains**

What May it Look Like When Done Right?

- Jeff, Lindsey and I will share case studies

Title 5: Opportunities and Challenges

Jeff Becker
Director of Facilities and Operations
Office of the Fresno County Superintendent of
Schools



Title 5

Title 5 addresses locational integration:

- Least restrictive environment is settled law at the federal and state levels
- Contains the school siting and design standards that address the issue and implement statute
- Reviews happen before a project is built, allowing integration to be considered in a timely manner

Title 5

§ 14036. Integrated Facilities.

...for school districts constructing classrooms for special education purposes, those classrooms shall be *no more physically separated from classrooms constructed for their non-handicapped peers than those classrooms are from each other*; preferably the classrooms are under the same roof and adjacent to the classrooms of their non-handicapped peers, specifically.

Title 5

14036 (a) A new school facility is considered integrated if it meets the following criteria:

- Classrooms for special education are located in proximity to regular education classrooms in such a way as to encourage age-appropriate interaction among all students.*
- Whenever possible, if relocatable classrooms are used for special education classes, the ratio of special education relocatable classrooms to permanent special education classrooms is the same as the classroom ratio between relocatable classrooms and permanent classrooms for regular education students.*
- Side-by-side school sites are not considered integrated.*

Title 5

A non-integrated site or stand alone center will not be approved and must be appealed to the Advisory Commission on Special Education

14036

(b) A waiver to acquire or newly construct a non-integrated facility is recommended the Advisory Commission on Special Education for approval only if it includes a plan to transition the individuals with exceptional needs to a regular campus setting. The waiver includes a capacity study of the existing special education classrooms in the special education local plan area (SELPA) to verify that no classrooms are available to house the population targeted in the waiver.

(c) The waiver includes justification as to why the non-integrated facility is the only option available on a long-term basis and discusses the feasibility of a short-term lease as an option to new construction or acquisition.

Title 5

Specific Project Elements:

- 14030(b)5 addresses bus drop off area used by students with special needs
 - *To provide equal access to insure the purposes of least restrictive environment, bus drop off for handicapped students is in the same location as for regular education students.*

Title 5

Specific Project Elements:

- 14030(h)3 provides characteristics of special education classrooms and support areas
 - Resource specialist
 - Speech and language
 - psychologist/counseling
 - Conference space for IEPs
 - Medical therapy units
 - Distribution on campus

Title 5

Desired Title 5 Updates

- Require consultation between districts and Special Education Local Plan Areas for project approval
- Generally, provide firmer guidance on integration by removing language such as “whenever possible”

Title 5

Desired Title 5 Updates

- Incorporate least restrictive environment into other elements that are silent on special education:
 - Educational specifications 14030(a)
 - Site layout 14030(b)
 - Placement of buildings 14030(f)
 - Americans with Disabilities Act 14030(p)

Case Study

Partnering with Washington Unified School District

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program
- Integrated within a single school district from preschool to high school!

Locational integration creates opportunity for social and functional integration

Hearing Impaired

- A hearing impairment is a hearing loss that prevents a person from totally receiving sounds through the ear.
- If the loss is mild, the person has difficulty hearing faint or distant speech. A person with this degree of hearing impairment may use a hearing aid to amplify sounds

Deafness

- An inability to comprehend verbal language due to an inability to hear characterizes deafness.
- A hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification.
- A cochlear implant may be used to provide a sense of sound.

Our Kids



Locational Integration

- Before partnering with WUSD:
 - Grades 9-12 class in basement at Fresno State (next to a preschool)
 - Preschool at a non-integrated special education center
 - Grades 1-6 students throughout home district
- Minimal opportunities for social and functional integration



Locational Integration

Five classes from preschool to high school on two campuses!

- K-8 Campus – 28 Students
 - Preschool-Kindergarten
 - Grades 1-3
 - Grades 4-5
 - Grades 6-8
- High School – 13 Students
 - Grades 9-12



Social Integration

- Students share recess and lunch periods
- Students participate in all assemblies, and award programs, including student of the month
- A winter program is held for students in sign language



Social Integration

Sense of Community

- Program staff hosts sign language class in evening for parents and community
- Staff involved in co-curricular activities



Social Integration

Participation in sports and clubs!

- High school students must be in a club or try out for sports
 - Made the team in football, softball, baseball
 - Tried out for other sports
 - Video game, skiing, sign language clubs
- FCSS staff help with sports and events for all students

Football



Baseball



Functional Integration

Mainstreaming with Supports

- Kindergartners doing so well the teacher asked to keep them in class longer!
- High school students mainstreamed for at least half of the day in classes such as math and art!

Functional Integration

Mainstreaming with Supports

- Grades 6-8 staff teach a sign language elective available to the entire school
- DHH kids can choose general electives offered at the school
- Special education staff and the district collaborate to help struggling students

Main-streaming



The Process and Challenges

Committed to Success!

- It took two years working with the district to agree on the program and identify space
- Portables were added for DHH use
- Transportation

Tips for Success

It's all about relationships!

- Develop strong ties with school district administration
- The site principal can be your greatest advocate
- Be an ambassador for the program
- Communicate often
- Be a team player

Case Study

Partnering with Downey Unified School District [Selaco High School](#)

- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program
- Built at the same time as new construction and modernization

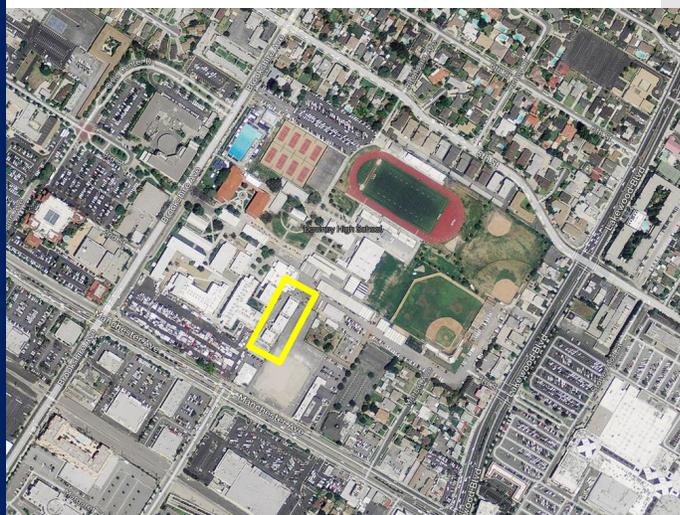
Coordinated design and construction efforts reduces conflict and cost and program integration creates opportunity

Case Study

- 2 story modular building
- 11 classrooms, conference room, Braille library and administrative office
- Funded by State's [School Facility Program](#), [Financial Hardship](#)
- Required 40 year [ground lease agreement](#)
- Construction completed in 2006
- District modernized campus and installed new buildings at about the same time
- Collaborated on design, construction and costs

Case Study

Campus Integration



Traffic pattern - Bus drop off - Proximity to amenities
Privacy - Specialty space

Case Study



Case Study

- “Some of my friends went to state colleges afterwards and one went to Gaulladet. The students are very generous, lip-reading, teaching basic sign language, and verbally repeating homonyms so there wouldn't be any cultural/linguistic miscommunication. We were part of a local program to socialize with non-deaf high school populations so we would be bused together on field trips or go camping.”

Ai M, Class of 2014

Case Study

Cheers without sounds



First deaf student to make the school cheer squad

Case Study

BEST PRACTICES

- Effective and constant communication with district
- Proper planning long range and in the moment
- Follow instructions and complete the task to build trust
- Take action
- Principals must make the call instead of delegating it

Case Study

BEST PRACTICES

- Effective and constant planning for all activities especially those affecting the district
- Be present
- Listen
- No last minute requests
- Recognize your contributions (space)
- Collaborate with experts (real estate)
- Advocate for your needs

Case Study

BEST PRACTICES

- Effective and constant people create good relationships
- Positive feedback
- Be visible
- Follow-up

AT THE END OF THE DAY, STUDENTS
MUST RECEIVE SERVICE

Prop 51: Opportunities and Challenges

Lindsay Currier
Facilities Planner
Riverside County Office of Education



Objectives

- Proposition 51 Funding
- Funding Timelines
- SFP Integrated Project Challenges – District/County
- Project Update: Palm Elementary School, Beaumont Unified School District

Prop 51

- Provides \$9 billion in bond authority
- SFP Unfunded List (Lack of AB 55 Loans)
 - Projects received approval under current bond authority and are waiting apportionment
 - \$63 million as of December 5, 2016
- SFP Unfunded List (Lack of Authority)
 - Projects received approval after all bond authority was exhausted and no guarantee of future funding
 - \$370 million as of December 5, 2016
- Applications Received Beyond Bond Authority List (Acknowledged List)
 - Projects not processed by the OPSC, did not receive approval from SAB, and have no guarantee of future funding
 - \$2.0 billion on list as of December 31, 2016

Funding Timelines

- New Construction/Modernization Projects
 - Potentially the only time to accomplish Integration
- Planning
 - Scope, Payment Process, Agency Approvals
- Financial Hardship (Valid for six months)
 - Financial Hardship Status Approval
 - Expired Financial Hardship Approval
 - Design Funding
 - Adjusted Grant Application
 - Ground Leases
 - Board Meetings
 - Audits

SFP Integrated Project Timelines/ Challenges

- Scoping the Project with Your Partner
- Outline the Process and Timelines
 - Design Professionals
 - Lump sum payment or treated as separate project completely
 - Agency Approvals
- Updating Enrollment/Eligibility
- Financial Hardship
- Audits

Existing Palm ES – Beaumont USD

- Existing Integrated Project – COE/District
 - 13,100 Square Feet
 - Permanent Building w/Six Classrooms, Admin, Multipurpose and Therapy Area, Kitchen, Support Personnel Area, Restrooms, and Support Space for Special Education
- Funded Through LPP (1980-1987)
 - Agreement for Services
 - RCOE used eligibility
 - RCOE hired design professionals
 - RCOE managed the construction
 - RCOE maintained all documentation
 - All contingent on approval by the SAB
- Current 40 Year Ground Lease Expires in 2024

Existing
Palm ES –
Beaumont
USD

- Original Plan – Demolish Existing Palm ES and Rebuild on Alternate Site



New
Palm ES -
Beaumont
USD

- New ES To Replace Palm ES
 - Planning/Ed Spec meetings started in 2014
 - Two large classrooms and support space for medically fragile students

OVERALL SITE PLAN



Palm ES – Beaumont USD

- Recent Changes
 - No longer demolish existing site
 - Use of existing site – not yet determined
- End Result
 - Still positive
 - District still planning for medically fragile classrooms at new site
 - We are still at the table as partners
 - Adequate facilities to house our students with special needs

In Summary

Yes, it's about relationships!

And [state policy](#) can help ensure a positive outcome even when positive or proactive relationships don't naturally exist.

Sometimes, this is how I feel...



...let's work together to enhance and support each other's efforts!

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