



Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary School District

Management Review

May 1, 2008



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Dr. Emerita Orta-Camilleri, Superintendent
Belmont-Redwood Shores School District
2960 Hallmart Drive
Belmont California 94002-2943

Dear Superintendent Orta-Camilleri:

In February 2008, the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District entered into an agreement with the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team for a study to perform the following:

1. Review the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the district's special education program delivery system and provide recommendations for improvement;
2. Identify options and processes needed for the transition of in-home ABA services for incoming three-year-olds to school-based services;
3. Review the district's costs for NPS students and provide recommendations for cost containment;
4. Analyze district staffing ratios within the special education program and provide recommendation for changes, as appropriate;
5. Provide recommendations for ensuring due process while working within the realities of a litigious parent population and limited resources.

FCMAT visited the district on March 5-7, 2008, to interview employees, analyze data and review information. This report is the results of those activities. We appreciate the opportunity to serve you, and please give our regards to all the employees of the Belmont-Redwood Shores School District.

Sincerely,

Joel D. Montero
Chief Executive Officer

FCMAT

Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer

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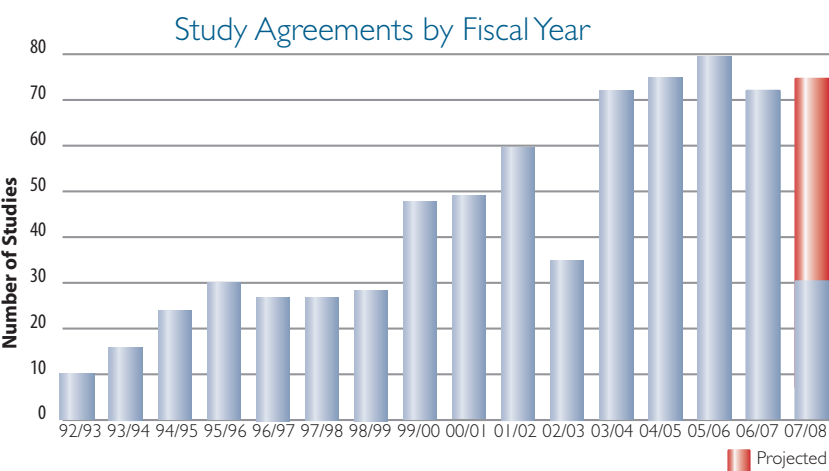
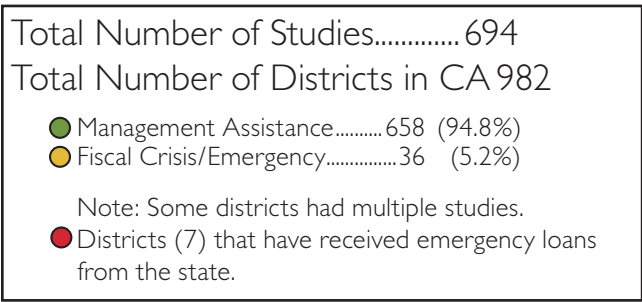
Foreword

FCMAT Background

The Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) was created by legislation in accordance with Assembly Bill 1200 in 1992 as a service to assist local educational agencies in complying with fiscal accountability standards.

AB 1200 was established from a need to ensure that local educational agencies throughout California were adequately prepared to meet and sustain their financial obligations. AB 1200 is also a statewide plan for county offices of education and school districts to work together on a local level to improve fiscal procedures and accountability standards. The legislation expanded the role of the county office in monitoring school districts under certain fiscal constraints to ensure these districts could meet their financial commitments on a multiyear basis. AB 2756 provides specific responsibilities to FCMAT with regard to districts that have received emergency state loans. These include comprehensive assessments in five major operational areas and periodic reports that identify the district’s progress on the improvement plans.

Since 1992, FCMAT has been engaged to perform nearly 700 reviews for local educational agencies, including school districts, county offices of education, charter schools and community colleges. Services range from fiscal crisis intervention to management review and assistance. FCMAT also provides professional development training. The Kern County Superintendent of Schools is the administrative agent for FCMAT. The agency is guided under the leadership of Joel D. Montero, Chief Executive Officer, with funding derived through appropriations in the state budget and a modest fee schedule for charges to requesting agencies.



Introduction

Background

Located in San Mateo County, the Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary School District has an enrollment of more than 2,500 students and serves the communities of Belmont and Redwood Shores as well as portions of Redwood City, San Carlos and San Mateo. The district is composed of the following schools:

Ralston Middle School	Cipriani School
Benjamin Fox School	Mae Nesbit School
Central School	Sandpiper School

In February 2008, the district entered into an agreement with the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team for a study that would perform the following:

1. Review the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the district's special education program delivery system and provide recommendations for improvement;
2. Identify options and processes needed for the transition of in-home ABA services for incoming three-year-olds to school-based services;
3. Review the district's costs for NPS students and provide recommendations for cost containment;
4. Analyze district staffing ratios within the special education program and provide recommendation for changes, as appropriate;
5. Provide recommendations for ensuring due process while working within the realities of a litigious parent population and limited resources.

Study Team

The study team was composed of the following members:

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Study Guidelines

FCMAT visited the district March 5-7, 2008 to review documents, interview staff members and collect information. This report is the result of those efforts and is divided into the following sections:

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Program Efficiency and Effectiveness
- III. Program Delivery and Cost Effectiveness
- IV. District Staffing Ratios
- V. Due Process

Executive Summary

The Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary School District is a comprehensive K-8 school district that provides a wide range of services to students with exceptional needs. Due to active parent and community involvement, expectations for student achievement are high.

The district provides a full range of services to students with exceptional needs despite limited financial resources. FCMAT found that overall, the district has established trust and respect with parents and service agencies to provide excellent services to students.

The district is concerned about significant fiscal increases in providing special education services. Special education encroachment on the general education fund is projected to increase by \$1.5 million during the 2007-08 school year. FCMAT found that \$1.4 million of this increase occurred because of the need to provide costly behavioral intervention services for 22 students with autism. Most of the newly identified students are in the three-and four-year old range and transitioned to the school district while already receiving a range of services through the Regional Center. These students require intensive behavioral intervention services in the home as part of their school program.

The student study team (SST) process is a function of the Special Education Department and has become a gateway to special education identification. The district should develop a Response to Intervention model (RTI) that is focused on general education intervention instead of a method of identifying students for special education.

Over the past two years, the district has made commendable efforts to explore new options for program delivery that contain costs and increase the efficiency of mandated services in special education. The Special Education Department has established a successful pattern of returning students from county office programs and programs operated by other school districts.

The district contracts with nonpublic agencies (NPA) in the same geographical area to provide Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services for 22 students at a cost of \$1.4 million or \$63,636 per student. In the 2006-2007 school year, the cost to serve 18 students was \$804,155 or \$44,675 per student. The cost and numbers of students being served have increased, and the cost per student has risen by \$18,961.

These 22 students attend preschool through second grade. Some ABA services are provided through special education programs at the school sites and county office.

Other students in the district also receive NPA services for ABA, which are part of the NPS and NPA costs of \$2,265,297. The district's NPS, NPA and the ABA programs for special education students are more costly than all other special education programs and services in the district. Some parents want the ABA provider to continue providing services to their child after age three.

School districts throughout the state are implementing ABA programs. One district pays \$16,000 per student using staff members hired and trained by the district. A visit to some of these programs would help the district learn which areas are easy and difficult to implement.

FCMAT believes it is reasonable to consider transferring the Inclusion Specialist's administrative responsibilities to site administrators and the Director of Special Education. The district should consider redesignating the Inclusion Specialist position and moving the case load responsibilities for fully included students to Learning Center teachers assigned full time to the student's school of attendance.

The district operates two special education preschool-kindergarten classes with an average enrollment of nine students. The preschool resources could be used more efficiently if the district rescheduled its special education pre-K classes so that one is held in the morning and the other in the afternoon.

The district contracts for one speech and language specialist position because of the lack of availability of staff. Many districts throughout the state have unfilled positions and use contract staff. Eliminating the need for the contracted position could result in an additional savings of \$17,000 per contract hired staff.

The district has been unable to hire an Occupational Therapist. To provide the mandated services for students, the district has contracted for this service at an annual cost of \$116,714. Contracting for this service adds approximately \$45,000 to the special education budget.

FCMAT found that the district has reduced costs through efforts such as building positive relationships with parents, resolving legal issues at the informal level, and forming a PTA for special education parents. There is a perception that while the district is successful at resolving issues at a lower level, the related costs are not actually reduced.

From 2006-07 to 2007-08, special education encroachment on the general education fund is projected to increase by \$1.5 million. However, at least \$1.4 million is due to an increase in mandated services for students with autism and not due process or legal fees.

This report will discuss how the district is effective and efficient in many aspects of the special education delivery system. As with numerous school districts of this size, many administrative responsibilities fall on only a few staff members. This creates heavy workloads and short time frames to complete these tasks. Therefore, communication is essential between all departments.

The report will reflect considerations for the district to streamline services at some reduced costs, while reviewing the requirements of maintenance of effort along with ensuring appropriate services for students with exceptional needs.

Findings and Recommendations

Program Efficiency and Effectiveness

Twelve percent of the Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary School District's students were identified as eligible for special education services in the 2005-06 school year, 13 percent in the 2006-07 school year and 15 percent in the 2007-08. This exceeds the statewide average identification rate of 11.5%. Forty-four new evaluations have been completed this year, and an additional 38 students were found eligible for special education. Another 25 evaluations are still in process. As the following table shows, a review of school referral rates in the district found that they are higher than average at some schools.

Referral Rate for Students Eligible for Special Education

School Site	Referrals for assessment 2007-08	Eligible for special education (as of 3/5/08)
Central	8	3
Cipriani	9	9
Fox	12	7
Nesbit*	34	18
Ralston	2	1

**This site may be affected by preschool referrals*

To maintain the identification rate at approximately the statewide average, the district should examine its eligibility, entrance and exit criteria and review the pupil count for eligibility trends. The district appears to overidentify students for special education, which can result in increased costs and cost-containment difficulties. Some school sites tend to refer more students for assessment. While every school site has its unique needs and student populations, the district should review the existing levels of intervention prior to referral and the identification process in schools with a high referral rate.

One of the strengths of the CASEMIS reporting system is its ability to track changes in student enrollment by disability over a four-year period. FCMAT reviewed the trends in disability areas from December 2004-2007. The data in the following table illustrates a shift in the district's special education population, which is consistent with statewide trends. As the following table shows, the district's specific learning disabled population has decreased while the area of autism has dramatically increased.

To control costs in special education, effective tools are necessary to manage the data that is critical to program development, staffing and the district's fiscal health. There is no position control in special education staffing, and this could greatly affect budget projections.

Annual Data Comparison, Autism and Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

California Special Education Management Information System (CASEMIS)				
Annual Data Comparison				
Disability	2004	2005	2006	2007
SLD	82	50	53	57
Autism	13	15	22	38

As of December 2006, research studies indicate that one of every 150 children nationwide has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In California, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) reports a large and increasing number of children with autism. For the quarter ending on June 2006, the DDS staff diagnosed 3,717 three- and four-year olds with autism. The district pupil count (Dec. 2007) indicates a 73% increase in the diagnosis of autism in the past school year.

Special education encroachment on the general education fund is projected to increase by \$1.5 million during the 2007-08 school year. FCMAT found that \$1.4 million of this increase occurred because of the need to provide costly behavioral intervention services for 22 students with autism. Most of the newly identified students are in the three-and four-year old range and transitioned to the school district while already receiving a range of services through the Regional Center. These students require intensive behavioral intervention services in the home as part of their school program. This range of service, its impact and alternatives will be discussed in greater depth in another section of this report.

The student study team (SST) process is a function of the Special Education Department and has become a gateway to special education identification. The process is defined by special education and is composed of special education forms and procedures. The SST process is heavily staffed with speech and language specialists and psychologists who are required to attend all SST team meetings. This is not the most effective use of special education resources. In other districts where the SST is a function of general education instead of special education, there is a higher level of participation by the site principal and other general education staff members. Special education staff members can be part of the SST on a case-by-case basis.

There is no formal training for the staff, including principals and general education teachers, on implementing the SST process. SST training should be provided annually for all staff members, and updated training should be ongoing. The district does not have a board policy that outlines the referral process and procedures for SSTs.

The district's referral rate is greatly affected by recent changes in the Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004. Changes in federal law establish new requirements for local school districts in evaluating children with disabilities as follows:

Section 300.131 Child Find for parentally-placed private school children with disabilities - Each LEA must locate, identify and evaluate all children with disabilities who are enrolled by their parents in private, including religions, elementary schools and secondary school located in the school district served by the Local Education Agency.

In the past, the district was responsible for evaluating only the students with disabilities that lived within its boundaries. Charles Armstrong School, one of the private schools located within the district's attendance boundaries, accounts for 18% of the evaluations completed by the district this year. FCMAT estimates that this change in requirements has cost the district an average of \$70,421 this year due to required staffing increases (.5 FTE psychologist and .2 FTE speech and language specialist). Plans are underway to finalize a memorandum of understanding that will provide for shared costs throughout the San Mateo Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). This should help the district maintain reasonable costs for private school assessments.

Some school site principals do not take ownership of the special education program at their site. Some do not regularly attend IEP meetings, are sometimes unavailable to participate in enrolling new special education students and do not function as liaisons with special education parents. The district lacks a clearly defined process for principals to verify residence of special education students enrolling in their schools.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Review the eligibility criteria for identifying students with disabilities and compare the trends in identification available on the pupil count submitted to the California Department of Education by the SELPA each December. This will provide data on the eligibility rate of the district in relation to other districts in the SELPA and provide comparisons with the statewide identification rate.
2. Review and implement entrance and exit criteria for students with disabilities requiring special education and related services. The district should also review its guidelines for special education eligibility.
3. Audit the referral rate for some school sites with high rates. The district should also review the existence of prereferral interventions that are available at that site and provide training and support to provide appropriate interventions and support to students prior to referral for special education.

4. Provide student study team training annually for all staff members and updated training as needed.
5. Develop and adopt a current board policy that outlines the referral process and procedures of student study teams. This policy should emphasize that the SST process is a function of general education to ensure that students are educated in the least restrictive environment and that movement toward a Response to Intervention model is focused on prereferral general education interventions.
6. Formally move the SST process from the Special Education Department to the Educational Services Department, ensuring that all principals take a leadership role in the SST process.
7. Restructure roles and responsibilities on the SST team so that the number of specialists (e.g. psychologists, speech and language specialists) is reduced and these personnel are free to perform other assessment and instructional duties for students with disabilities.
8. Ensure the SST handbook is utilized throughout the district.
9. Continue with the SELPA plan to finalize a memorandum of understanding among participating members of the SELPA to share in the impact of costs for assessment at Charles Armstrong School.
10. Define the expectation that principals attend IEP meetings for special education students assigned to their school sites.
11. Refine the enrollment process for principals at the school sites so that it includes residence verification by the site administration prior to enrollment in special education and related services.

Program Delivery and Cost Effectiveness

Over the past two years, the district has made commendable efforts to explore new options for program delivery that contain costs and increase the efficiency of mandated services in special education. The Special Education Department has established a successful pattern of returning students from county office programs and programs operated by other school districts. In the 2007-08 school year, the staff successfully returned 13 students to district programs at a savings of \$591,864.

In the 2007-08 school year, the district began implementing the learning center model (LC) for district provided special education and related services. This implementation followed a successful pilot program operated by the district in 2006-07. The LC model is based on an integrated service model designed to meet the individual needs of each student and may include small group or one-to-one instruction based on diagnostic and prescriptive teaching with a variety of educational supports. It replaces the more traditional model of special day class and resource specialist models. The LC model promotes the education of students in the least-restrictive environment, allows children to attend neighborhood schools and resulted in a savings to the district of \$125,883 in 2007-08 (Additional information is available in the appendix section of this report). The long-range program goals include a reduction in the numbers of students qualifying for special education, more movement/transition back to general education, greater flexibility in the use of resources, and a reduction in the need for full-time instructional aides for fully included students. The potential reduction in the number of aides should prompt additional savings.

To make these types of major reductions to special education expenditures, the district must ensure that it meets the federal maintenance-of-effort requirement for special education, which is often referred to as the “supplement and not supplant” standard (ref. Sections 300.203-300.205 of Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations [CFR]). According to these requirements, the district must continue to spend the same level of state and local funds on special education as it did in the prior year, however, a lower level of local and state support is permitted under several circumstances such as the following:

:

- The voluntary departure of staff at the high end of the salary scale who are replaced by staff at the lower end of the salary scale.
- The termination of services to students who have moved out of the district or exited special education.
- A decrease in the enrollment of children with disabilities (a potential outcome of the LC model).
- A discontinuation of costly expenditures for long-term purchases (a potential as students transition to district programs from high cost out of district programs).

Because the cost of salary and benefits along with step-and-column increases will occur each year, the district likely can still meet the federal maintenance-of-effort requirement, even after incorporating the savings achieved through alternative district special education programming.

The Superintendent's cabinet members have a variety of different functions, duties and responsibilities, which is very common in school districts of this size. Therefore, interdepartmental communication is critical regarding position control, staffing, hiring, budget analysis, projections, facility needs and educational programming requirements. Timely communication is occasionally lacking between departments and the Superintendent. Greater emphasis should be placed on communication with the Superintendent regarding issues that create unexpected expenditures to the general fund.

In reviewing the efficiency of the budget planning process for special education, FCMAT found that the district has no streamlined, effective method of analyzing significant data needed for staffing projections that are critical to the effective management and overall operation. At present, data is gathered on demand without a standardized approach, which is time consuming and inefficient. To control costs in special education, effective tools are necessary to manage the data that is critical to program development, staffing and the district's fiscal health. There is no position control in special education staffing, and this could greatly affect budget projections.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Continue developing programs and services in the district rather than using placements at the county office or other districts.
2. Continue implementing the Learning Center Model or other appropriate alternative models of programs and services for students with disabilities.
3. Continue to ensure that the maintenance-of-effort requirement outlined in federal law is met.
4. Conduct weekly meetings among the business office, Special Education and Education Services departments with a maximum meeting length of one hour for updates on any areas that affect budget or decisions regarding personnel. The results of these meetings should be shared with the Superintendent to inform her of key issues affecting the district.
5. At least bimonthly, utilize the superintendent's executive cabinet meeting to update district leadership on issues and projections that have fiscal and programmatic impact on the district. The agenda for this update should be written and structured and presented at least 48 hours in advance.

Transition of Services

Applied Behavior Analysis

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a method of treating autistic children that became popular in the 1980s. ABA claims to have a proactive style of teaching that identifies the actions students should take, not just those they should avoid. ABA is not a specific program, but a set of principles and guidelines that can be used as a basis for educational programs.

Behavioral and educational intervention programs for young autistic children are a fast-growing area of special education. Over the last 20 years, numerous methods and interventions have become controversial with parents and educators. School districts and county offices that are responsible for programs for young autistic children frequently disagree on the assessments or services recommended by IEP teams. Some school districts offer one strategy, but according to the research, all autistic children learn through a variety of interventions or a combination of methods. It is also common for the practitioners of one strategy or intervention to be critical of those who use another method.

The first major study applying an intensive behavioral intervention program for young autistic children was published in 1987. Student therapists provided students with an average of 40 hours intensive instruction per week, working in the home, school and community. Each therapist worked with one child every day for a year. This approach relied on basic behavioral principles and methods. Aggressive and self-stimulatory behaviors were reduced by ignoring and using time out to shape more socially acceptable behaviors. Several other experts have adapted this intensive behavioral program, which has reduced the number of hours of instruction per week, the length of follow-up, and the necessity of using other personnel.

The district contracts with nonpublic agencies (NPA) in the same geographical area to provide ABA services for 22 students at a cost of \$1.4 million or \$63,636 per student. In the 2006-2007 school year, the cost to serve 18 students was \$804,155 or \$44,675 per student. The cost and numbers of students being served have increased, and the cost per student has risen by \$18,961.

These 22 students attend preschool through second grade. Some ABA services are provided through special education programs at the school sites and county office. Other students in the district also receive NPA services for ABA, which are part of the NPS and NPA costs of \$2,265,297. The district's NPS, NPA and the ABA programs for special education students are more costly than all other special education programs and services in the district. Some parents want the ABA provider to continue providing services to their child after age three.

A brief analysis of autism treatments used in the U.S. is included in the appendix section of this report.

In developing new programs for children identified as having autism or autistic spectrum disorders, it is important for the school district to establish a relationship with Golden Gate Regional Center and nonpublic schools and agencies in San Mateo County that provide ABA programs to children and families. Other strategies in working with children include the following:

- Picture Exchange Communication (PECS)
- Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-Handicapped Children (TEACCH)
- Floor time
- Inclusion
- Social stories
- Sensory Integration Therapy
- Relationship Development Intervention (RDI)

School districts throughout the state are implementing ABA programs. One district pays \$16,000 per student using staff members hired and trained by the district. A visit to some of these programs would help the district learn which areas are easy and difficult to implement. Cost containment will not be immediate since equipment and materials need to be purchased, and district employees will need to be provided with extensive professional development. The following school districts and or SELPAs may be visited:

- Oakland Unified School District – Programs for Exceptional Children
- Poway Unified School District – San Diego County
- Rocklin Unified School District – Placer County
- Bob Farran, Director, Southwest and Area Administrator – Los Angeles County

**FCMAT contacted the Northern California Diagnostic School in Fremont regarding consultation to the school district on ABA services and other related autism services. The Diagnostic School provides outstanding professional development and services to school districts throughout Northern California. The district should immediately contact the school regarding ABA and autism services.*

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Carefully review the IEP of each student receiving ABA services or special education services in an NPA and/or NPS. A checklist should be developed to ensure that the district's representative serves as administrator at IEP meetings and that district policies and procedures are consistently followed. The checklist should include the following areas:

- Student information
 - Recent assessment information
 - Methods of instruction
 - Appropriate goals and objectives
 - Assessments of student performance that drive and guide instruction
 - The frequency and duration of services
 - A transition plan
 - Absences
 - The length of enrollment
 - Other appropriate issues
2. Assign the teams to review this checklist to identify patterns, instructional strategies, assessment information and any other data that would help determine when students should transition from an ABA and/or NPS to general education. Dual enrollment is another possibility.
 3. Lead the IEP meetings of children receiving services from NPS and NPA providers. The person chairing these IEP meetings should contact the administrator of the NPS or NPA to briefly confirm the date and time and any other information that a chairperson needs before the meeting.
 4. Hold at least two meetings a year with all NPS and NPA providers to discuss programs and services and any new directions under consideration by the district. This is an opportunity to build trust and positive relationships and potentially develop new and innovative programs in the public school system instead of always relying on an NPS and/or NPA for services.
 5. Develop a master plan that includes a time line detailing when the majority of ABA programs and other services to ASD students will be operational. This master plan should also include the following information:
 - How parents will be included in ABA programs.
 - Identification and referral procedures.
 - Comprehensive assessments in speech and language, psychology, physical and occupational therapy.
 - The salaries and job description of tutors.
 - Curriculum and instruction
 - The salary and job description of behavioralists.
 - A two-year professional development calendar for psychologists, speech and language therapists, occupational and physical therapists, and ABA supervisors.

6. Hire a trained person to supervise the current programs and work with the ABA staff and general education teachers on monitoring the programs in general education classrooms and learning centers, transitioning students to different programs as necessary and monitoring programs and services. This person must be experienced in ABA, have the appropriate ABA credentials and training and have a good reputation in the ABA community.
7. Consider operating some ABA programs after school and not during regular school hours. These services could be provided at the schools instead of the NPA sites. This would allow some students to avoid being pulled out of class for services and remain in the general education program longer, demonstrating the district's flexibility in serving students. This could be an area of cost containment.

Other Issues

Many autistic children benefit from speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and physical therapy. An Occupational Therapist can help children with poor hand skills and sensory motor problems that are common among autistic children. Physical therapy helps some children with motor planning, which is a critical skill in child development. Speech and language therapists work with nonverbal children and focus on language and speech development. All these therapies are important to the education of autistic children.

The district's general education staffs have been with professional development on children with autism, but this training is not ongoing. The district's two small elementary schools have two professional development days at the beginning of the school year as well as early release on Wednesdays. A special education needs assessment would help the district gather information from teachers on professional development areas that would improve student learning and/or provide strategies for dealing with difficult behaviors in the classrooms. Many teachers need help to modify or redesign curriculums for students with autism and other disabilities. Another recommended topic is communicating more effectively with the parents of special education students.

Comprehensive assessments and evaluations establish the direction necessary to develop eligibility criteria for special education services and develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Assessments must provide accurate data to identify the child's strengths and needs and develop realistic teaching strategies. This initial assessment information provides the baseline for evaluating student progress.

The district has exit criteria to determine when a student no longer needs a particular special education service, but these criteria are not consistently used. Utilizing the district's exit criteria, exit criteria should be developed for each child at the first IEP meeting and discussed in detail with the parents at every subsequent IEP meeting. This

will provide parents with information about when the student will no longer need special education and on the methods of instruction that will be used to accomplish goals.

Parents are often concerned when student IEP teams discuss transferring students from special education, especially when this subject has never been discussed at previous IEP meetings. These criteria should be added to the IEP since many of the state's SELPAs are addressing the same issue.

The Sonoma County SELPA Special Education Handbook is a good reference source since the SELPA developed exit criteria on speech and language services years ago. Another reference is the Workload Analysis Approach for Establishing Speech-Language Caseload Standards in the Schools: Technical Report, a publication by the American Speech-Language Hearing Association.

The district also lacks a consistent transition process for students receiving services at NPSs, NPAs, and home programs. This type of plan would have to be in accordance with Education Code 56345 B-4 on transfers from NPS and NPAs to regular programs or special day classes for any part of the school day. When appropriate, this topic should be discussed at IEP meetings so the student, the parents and the school can begin the transition process. Arrangements should be made so that the student can first visit the program and perhaps spend a couple of hours there. This should then increase to weekly sessions, gradually transitioning students back to the public school system. This takes a great deal of coordination with the parents and the NPS to be successful. This cost containment approach for students in NPS and NPA programs can be effective if managed properly.

Parents are often aware of their child's disability and in some cases, have had extensive evaluations completed by medical professionals and others. However, parents are often reluctant to accept a diagnosis of autism and the possibility of mental retardation. Assessment results should be presented to parents objectively and sensitively. Parents should be encouraged to actively participate in the assessment process to ensure that the assessment reflects the child's functioning levels.

The district has created a Home Communication Sheet that is sent home to parents, creating a more positive relationship between the schools and the parents. The Special Education PTA has also strengthened the relationships between parents and schools in the area of special education. This group developed a colorful flyer on special education topics and sponsored professional development for parents and staff.

One professional development program that the district should consider is How to Establish an Effective Learning Community, which teaches school personnel and parents to support one another, the school and home instruction. Since schools are held to a different standard of accountability, the district should form learning communities where every teacher is held accountable for the learning of all students in that classroom. A

program from the Riverside County Office of Education, Riverside County Achievement Teams (RCAT), supports schools in improving student achievement through staff mentoring. Dr. Mike Jones, Assistant Superintendent, Riverside County Office of Education is the contact person. The autumn 2007 issue of *Special Edge*, a newsletter published by the California Department of Education, includes an article on this topic.

It is difficult to assess children who may have developmental delays, mental retardation, autism spectrum disorders or combinations of these disabilities. Therefore, school districts should have talented professional teams with special training in these areas to conduct assessments, especially in the area of autism. Autism teams can often ease parental fears that school personnel lack the expertise to provide assessments and recommend appropriate programs and services.

All referrals, assessments, IEP planning and development, and IEP reviews would go through this team, and professional development should be implemented to help the team develop additional expertise. Preparation may include initial and ongoing professional development as well as observation of programs and services known for their effectiveness with autistic children. The Diagnostic School is an excellent training resource for the autism team.

Researchers indicate that autism is not a single disease but a range of disorders along an autistic spectrum. As a result, great confusion has arisen about autism, and different terms are often used, including autistic, autistic-like, autistic spectrum disorder, pervasive developmental disorder, mentally retarded and speech and language impaired. It has also become increasingly difficult to identify the appropriate assessments and indicators of services based on the assessment results.

All SELPAs as well as the 21 regional centers in California are required to have memorandum of understanding (MOU) between SELPA school districts and regional centers. This memorandum should define each agency's responsibility in providing services to children and youth ages three to 22. Many agreements describe a collaborative role in delivering services for children and their families. A MOU could accomplish the following:

- Ensure services are provided to mutual students (special education students who are also regional center clients) according to legislative mandates and intents.
- Encourage a cooperative and collaborative relationship among education agencies, regional centers and families.
- Develop and maintain open communication channels between agencies and families.
- Define the financial responsibilities of each agency in accordance with the Lanterman Act and California Education Code.

- Address and implement a smooth transition for children before their third birth date.
- Develop procedures and a process for resolving disputes.

The San Mateo SELPA has a written agreement with Golden Gate Regional Center (GGR) that was signed in June 2007. The regional center recently provided the school district with a list of the 40 students who will turn three years of age in the 2008-2009 school year. Providing additional services for these students will have a major financial impact on the district.

A future MOU should include language to address case management responsibilities and the role and responsibility of school districts. The district should also include language regarding three-year-old children and how these referrals should be made. Both agencies should discuss how large numbers of referrals will affect the educational system and families and the alternatives. Since discussions are taking place regarding the Jump Start Learning to Learn program, it may be appropriate to identify the areas of this program that could be included in the interagency agreement.

It would be beneficial to establish communication with parents of the 40 children who will qualify for services. Based on their ages, the district could notify all families of the dates of meetings to discuss special education programs in the district and begin establishing time lines for providing assessments to these children. The district could also involve the parents in professional development provided by the Special Education PTA and other workshops.

The regional center also has discussed the possibility of implementing a Jumpstart program of early childhood education in the near future. This program was created and developed in 2004 as a national model to provide needed training to parents, teachers, and others who work directly with young children with autism. Jump Start came from the UCSF/CCLP Autism Clinic as a research program under the direction of Dr. Bryna Siegel, is well known, and is expanding throughout the state.

When young children receive services from an agency other than the school system, a relationship is established between the parents, the service providers and the agency. The relationship between the school and family can become strained when there is a potential change in service delivery. Home programs can become a comfortable learning environment for the child and the parents, especially in the early years.

SELPA administrators held numerous discussions with the regional center administration regarding the roles of each agency and the interagency relationships between the schools and regional centers. The staffs from the school district, the SELPA and regional center meet every six weeks to discuss students coming into the educational systems.

Some regional centers enjoy a positive and cohesive relationship with families and have a clear understanding of their needs as well as those of the children. Since the regional center can be involved with families from birth to adulthood, strong ties often develop between social workers, case managers and other regional center support staff members and parents. Schools need to be sensitive to families when their students transfer from an agency's service to the school system. These changes should occur gradually and with the appropriate support.

The San Mateo County Blue Ribbon Task Force on Autism published a report dated July 11, 2007. The recommendations of this report have not been approved to date. The district was a member of this committee. The district should meet with the SELPA administrator to discuss the school district's need for the expertise of autism specialists that can provide consultation to school districts. Since San Mateo County includes 24 school districts, many in the Bay Area, the demand for services from parents of autistic children will continue to place a serious strain on school districts. The San Mateo County Office of Education reduced the numbers of students it served, and school districts want to provide cost-effective local programs, which will necessitate considerable support from the SELPA.

Because of the increase in the number of children identified as autistic, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell last year formed a Superintendent's Autism Advisory Committee. On November 2, 2007, the committee's recommendations were submitted to the Legislature and the Governor. The committee provides advice on how public and nonpublic schools can better serve students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and their families. The committee made the following recommendations regarding policy, information sharing and assistance to schools:

1. Changes are called for to ensure a seamless delivery of services and early intervention for students with ASD and their families. Also, changes are called for in the dissemination, training, credentials, and certification of people working with students with ASD.
2. Develop a statewide, education-focused interagency clearinghouse to provide information on ASD-related, evidence-based, interventions, strategies, and other resources.
3. Provide technical assistance and training to people at schools to implement and disseminate evidence-based ASD information and strategies.

Information about the committee and a copy of the recommendations can be obtained via the Superintendent's Autism Advisory Committee (SAAC) – Administration and Support Web site at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/as/saac.asp>. Two other studies on ASD were completed last year by the Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism and a statewide committee on autism funded by the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). The DDS study is available on the DDS Web site at <http://www.dds.cahwnet.gov/>. These studies should be incorporated into any new programs and services for autistic children.

The district also has insufficient classroom space to meet the needs of an expanding special education program.

Recommendations

The school district should:

1. Establish communication as soon as possible with the parents of the 40 students from Regional Center Services who will turn three years of age in 2008-2009.
2. Continue to improve the working relationship between the Regional Center and the schools in the San Mateo SELPA. This relationship is crucial in moving ABA programs from a home-based/agency-based program to a school-based model.
3. Consider contacting the SELPA to discuss modifications to the interagency agreement with Golden Gate Regional Center as previously discussed in this report.
4. Work with the Regional Center and the SELPA regarding the Jump Start Learning to Learn program. The Placer County SELPA may be contacted for information.
5. Work directly with the SELPA administrator on the recommendations made by the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Autism in July 2007 focusing on autism programs in the San Mateo County SELPA.
6. Form an autism team consisting of a general education teacher, school psychologists, a Speech and Language Therapist, and an Occupational Therapist.
7. Continue using the Home Communication Sheet to include parents in school-to-home issues.
8. Review the professional development plan and focus on the certificated staff to improve communication and collaboration between students and teachers in classrooms.

9. Continue working with the Special Education PTA to maintain a good working relationship with the Special Education Department. The PTA can help increase parent participation at schools and work with the district to improve educational services for special education students.
10. Complete and implement a facilities study as soon as possible. Many preschool students could be eligible for special education services, but it would not be cost effective to place them in NPA or NPS programs. In the afternoon, the district could use school facilities such as preschool special day classes and kindergarten rooms.
11. Review the exit criteria for all special education students. Exit criteria should be developed for each child at the first IEP meeting and discussed in detail with the parents at every subsequent IEP meeting.
12. Develop a student transition plan in accordance with Education Code 56345 B-4 on transfers from NPS and NPAs to regular programs or special day classes for any part of the school day.
13. Develop a master plan for providing special education services to autistic children. A part of the master plan should detail how the district will work with parents of autistic students. There are guidelines and directions on how and when to transition ABA services from one provider to another, which in this case, could be district personnel. This is usually not a financial concern for parents, but the relationships with each child created in the current ABA model may be an issue. When parents are satisfied with the ABA providers, and the child is making progress in the program, it is difficult to make changes.
14. Meet with the current ABA providers so that they are included and have input into the model. Parents from the Special Education PTA should be included, and an expert should be hired to help the district design the master plan for autistic children. Parents should have an opportunity for input into the program, and a chance to share their experiences and knowledge with the school district staff. Many parents of autistic children are knowledgeable, research-oriented, and motivated to share information.

District Staffing Ratios

FCMAT's review of the size of the individual school sites and the district as a whole found that it is reasonable to consider transferring the Inclusion Specialist's administrative responsibilities to site administrators and the Director of Special Education. The district should consider redesignating the Inclusion Specialist position and moving the case load responsibilities for fully included students to Learning Center teachers assigned full time to the student's school of attendance. The principal is in a key position to assume responsibility as the liaison between the district and the parents of fully included students.

FCMAT reviewed the staffing ratios of the Designated Instructional Services (DIS) staff using comparative statistics and statewide benchmarks developed by School Services of California, Inc. In a few instances, the staffing is defined with maximum case loads in the Education Code, but for the most part, guidelines are used for best practice. As the following tables demonstrate, FCMAT found that case loads for speech and language specialists and psychologists are well below the standard of practice in the state. The district should consider aligning DIS case loads with the guidelines used by other districts throughout the state. In addition, the district ratio of psychologists to students is far below the standard of practice in the state. However, several factors may have prompted this. A new law went into effect last year necessitating that the district of location complete assessments for special education students. This necessitated the addition of a .5 psychologist. Another significant factor was taking back county office and NPS students and starting a new district severely handicapped special day class. This justified an increase in psychologist and speech therapist time.

Designated Instructional Services (DIS) Case Loads (Guidelines vs. District)

Designated Instruction Services (DIS) Case loads		
Provider	Guidelines	Belmont –Redwood Shores
Individual/Small group Instruction	20-28	Learning Center Model 19
Occupational Therapy	20-35	43
Speech and Language Preschool	40 Maximum (per EC)	34
Speech and Language (Elem)	55 Average (per EC)	42.6

Comparative Statistics: Statewide Staffing Benchmarks for Psychologists

Comparative Statistics: Statewide Staffing Benchmarks for Psychologists vs. District		
Staffing	Elementary Enrollment per FTE	FTE Belmont-Redwood Shores
Psychologists	1,596	737

The district operates two special education preschool-kindergarten classes with an average enrollment of nine students. The preschool resources could be used more efficiently if the district rescheduled its special education pre-K classes so that one is held in the morning and the other in the afternoon. This would allow for the elimination of one teacher position while the district continues to provide the appropriate level of mandated services, yielding an approximate cost savings of \$85,270 per year.

The district contracts with an independent provider for speech and language specialist services because of the lack of availability of staff. Many districts throughout the state have unfilled positions and contract with outside providers. The district salary cost of the in-house position is \$93,282, and the cost of an outside provider is \$110,000. Replacing the outside provider with a district employee could result in an additional savings of \$17,000 per contract hired staff.

The district has been unable to hire an Occupational Therapist. To provide the mandated services for students, the district has contracted for this service at an annual cost of \$116,714. Contracting for this service adds approximately \$45,000 to the special education budget when compared to the cost of a district Occupational Therapist.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Reassign the administrative duties of the Inclusion Specialist position to site administrators and the Director of Special Education. The learning center Teacher would observe the one-to-one paraeducators and provide strategies for them. This Teacher can also be responsible for arranging IEP meetings and testing while the school Psychologist observes inclusion students in the classroom and provides recommendations/strategies for the teachers and paraeducators.
2. Provide annual training and support to the school site staff to facilitate full inclusion with the appropriate accommodations and modifications to general education curriculum.
3. Maintain occupational therapy case loads at the current level since the district reports that these case loads are manageable at present.
4. Review the use of speech and language specialists and justify the increased staffing or reconfigure speech case loads and reduce by one Speech Pathologist, which could result in a savings of \$93,282 per year.
5. Maintain individual/small group instruction at the current levels to allow Learning Center teachers to implement the previous recommendation regarding the Inclusion Specialist position.

6. Review the use of the school psychologists and justify the increased staffing or align the psychologist staffing to the Statewide Staffing Benchmarks. This could result in a staff reduction of 1.9 psychologists and a savings of \$189,430 per year.
7. Secure a district hired speech and language specialists in lieu of contract staff. This could result in a cost savings of \$17,000 per year.
8. Reschedule the preschool- Kindergarten classes so that one class is held in the morning and the other in the afternoon for an approximate savings of \$85,270 per year.
9. Secure a district hired Occupational Therapist in lieu of contract staff. This could result in a cost savings of approximately \$45,000 per year. The district should continue its positive efforts to hire a qualified applicant.

Due Process

The district has reduced formal due process filings and costs over the past three years as indicated in the following table:

Due Process Cost Reduction: 2005-08	
Due Process Cost Reduction 2005-2008	
School Year	Cost Savings
2005-06	\$158,709
2006-07	\$27,700
2007-08	\$18,882

There is a perception that while the district is successful at resolving issues at a lower level, the related costs are not actually reduced. However, FCMAT found that the district has reduced costs through efforts such as building positive relationships with parents, resolving legal issues at the informal level, and forming a PTA for special education parents.

From 2006-07 to 2007-08, special education encroachment on the general education fund is projected to increase by \$1.5 million. At least \$1.4 million was due to an increase in mandated services for students with autism and not due process or legal fees. The figures in the above table represent the total cost of mediated settlements and attorney fees. The district has clearly changed the direction of formal due process filings over the past three years with a significant decrease in the associated costs.

Recommendations

The district should:

1. Continue to build defensible programs that provide behavioral intervention services to students with autism in a more cost effective manner.
2. Continue to expand options for developing positive relationships with parents through the PTA for special education through parent education on the IEP process and strategies for effective communication with the district staff.
3. Provide annual training for all principals and the general education staff on the legal aspects of special education and key areas.
4. Provide all staff members with training on mediating differences and resolving disputes, including communication strategies on all levels.
5. Consider using the facilitated IEP process and alternative dispute resolution programs to further reduce the need for litigation.

Appendices

- A. Learning Center Cost Analysis Update
- B. Summary of Autism Treatments
- C. Guidelines for Use of Special Circumstance Aides
- D. Study Agreement

**Learning Center Cost Analysis Update
May 2008**

2006-2007		Proposed in March 2007		Current 2007-2008	
Staffing Requirements					
2006-07 Certificated Staff (SDC/RSP)		Required Staff for Learning Centers		Current 2007-08 Learning Center Staff	
1.0 RSP @ Central & Sandpiper 1.0 RSP @ Fox & Nesbit 1.0 Learning Center Teacher @ Cipriani 1.0 SDC 2-5 @ Central .5 SDC (Medical Leave) 0.5 RSP (Temporary) @ Fox Total 5.0 FTE Teachers		1.0 LC Teacher @ Cental 1.0 LC Teacher @ Fox 1.0 LC Teacher @ Nesbit 1.0 LC Teacher @ Sandpiper 1.0 LC Teacher @ Cipriani 5.0 FTE LC Teachers Required		1.0 LC Teacher @ Cental 1.0 LC Teacher @ Fox 1.0 LC Teacher @ Nesbit 1.0 LC Teacher @ Sandpiper 1.0 LC Teacher @ Cipriani Total 5.0 FTE LC Teachers	
Classified ParaEducators		Required LC ParaEducators		Current 2007-08 LC ParaEducators	
0.75 ParaEducator @ Central SDC 2-5 0.75 ParaEducator @ Cipriani LC 0.75 ParaEducator @ Cipriani LC 0.375 ParaEducator @ Fox RSP 0.375 ParaEducator @ Sandpiper RSP 0.375 ParaEducator @ Nesbit RSP 0.375 ParaEducator @ Central RSP Total 3.75 FTE ParaEducators		1.125 ParaEducators @ Central LC 1.125 ParaEducator @ Cipriani LC 1.125 ParaEducator @ Fox LC 1.125 ParaEducator @ Nesbit LC 1.125 ParaEducator @ Sandpiper LC 5.625 ParaEducators Required <i>1.875 Additional ParaEducator Required* which will be covered by existing 1:1 Paras who will be reassigned</i>		1.125 ParaEducators @ Central LC 1.125 ParaEducator @ Cipriani LC *1.50 ParaEducator @ Fox LC 1.125 ParaEducator @ Nesbit LC 1.125 ParaEducator @ Sandpiper LC 6 LC ParaEducators <i>Total number of 1:1 ParaEducators has been reduced by 4.89 with the LC implementation *.375 added due to increase in students @ Fox LC</i>	
LC Implementation yields a decrease of 5.2 FTE Inclusion ParaEducators (+1.875 LC Paras Req*) yields a cost savings of 3.325 Paras		Salaries (3.325 X 23,000)	\$ 76,475	Salaries (2.65 X 23,000)	(\$60,950)
		Fixed Payroll Costs .11171	\$ 13,696	Fixed Payroll Costs .11171	(\$6,809)
		Benefits (3.325 X 9,625)	\$ 32,003	Benefits (2.65 X 9,625)	(\$25,506)
		Total	\$ (122,174)	Total ParaEducator Savings	(\$93,265)
Transportation					
Reduction in transportation costs after LC implementation. Students can remain in their home school to receive special services.			Yellow Cab savings		(\$19,800)
			Parent reimbursement savings		(\$2,818)
			Total Transportation Savings		(\$22,618)
Instructional Supplies/Materials/Furniture					
All furniture and instructional supplies were transferred from the existing SDCs and RSP programs-no additional expenditures were made Proposed budget of \$10,000 for supplies was not expended					(\$10,000)
Staff Training					
Elk Grove School District and Jefferson Elementary School District provided training Special & General Ed Staff					NC
Cipriani has implemented the CAST - Collaborative Academic Support Team -model.					NC
District Inclusion Specialist has provided ongoing support and training to LC teachers.					NC
Housing					
All elementary sites located space in their schools for the LCs.					NC
Total Cost Savings of LC Implementation for 2007-2008					(\$125,883)

Autism Treatments

Current Interventions in Autism — A Brief Analysis

	Lovaas	TEACCH	PECS
Background	also known as Discrete Trial (DT), Intensive Behavior Intervention (IBI), Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA); DT was earliest form of behavior modification; initial research reported in 1987; initial intent to achieve inclusive kindergarten readiness; has “morphed” into IBI and ABA.	stands for Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communication-handicapped Children; over 32 years empirical data on efficacy of TEACCH approach exists; includes parents as co-therapists; recognizes need for supports from early childhood through adulthood; main focus is on autism rather than behavior.	stands for Picture Exchange Communication System; derived from need to differentiate between <i>talking</i> and <i>communicating</i> ; combines in-depth knowledge of speech therapy with understanding of communication where student does not typically attach meaning to words and lack of understanding of communication exists; high compatibility with TEACCH.
Goals	teach child <i>how to learn</i> by focusing on developing skills in attending, imitation, receptive/expressive language, pre-academics, and self-help.	provide strategies that support person throughout lifespan; facilitate autonomy at all levels of functioning; can be accommodated to individual needs.	help child <i>spontaneously</i> initiate communicative interaction; help child understand the <i>function</i> of communication; develop communicative competency.
How Implemented	uses ABC model; every trial or task given to the child consists of: antecedent — a directive or request for child to perform an action, behavior — a response from the child that may include successful performance, non-compliance, no response, consequence — a reaction from the therapist, including a range of responses from strong positive reinforcement to faint praise to a negative “No!”, pause — to separate trials from one another (intertrial interval).	clearly organized, structured, modified environments and activities; emphasis on visual learning modalities; uses functional contexts for teaching concepts; curriculum is individualized based on individual assessment; uses structure and predictability to promote spontaneous communication.	recognizes that young children with autism are not strongly influenced by social rewards; training begins with functional acts that bring child into contact with rewards; begins with physically assisted exchanges and proceeds through a hierarchy of eight phases; requires initial ratio of 2:1.
Reported Outcomes	first replications of initial research reporting gains in IQ, language comprehension and expression, adaptive and social skills.	gains in function and development; improved adaptation and increase in functional skills; learned skills generalized to other environments; North Carolina reports lowest parental stress rates and rate of requests for out-of-home placement, and highest successful employment rates.	Pyramid Educational Consultants report incoming empirical data supporting: increased communicative competency among users (children understanding the <i>function</i> of communication); increasing reports of emerging spontaneous <i>speech</i> .
Advantages of Approach	recognizes need for 1:1 instruction; utilizes repetitions of learned responses until firmly imbedded; tends to keep child engaged for increasing periods of time; effective at eliciting verbal production in select children; is a “jump start” for many children, with best outcomes for those in mild-to-moderate range.	dynamic model that takes advantage of and incorporates research from multiple fields; model does not remain static; anticipates and supports inclusive strategies; compatible with PECS, Floor Time, OT, PT, selected therapies; addresses sub-types of autism, using individualized assessment and approach; identifies emerging skills, with highest probability of success; modifiable to reduce stress on child and/or family.	helps to get language started; addresses both the communicative and social deficits of autism; well-suited for pre-verbal and non-verbal children AND children with a higher Performance IQ than Verbal IQ; semantics of PECS more like spoken language than signing.
Concerns with Approach	heavily promoted as THE approach for autism in absence of any comparative research to support claim; no differentiation for subtypes when creating curriculum; emphasizes compliance training, prompt dependence; heavy focus on behavioral approach may ignore underlying neurological aspects of autism, including issues of executive function and attention switching; may overstress child and/or family; costs reported as high as \$50,000 per child per year; prohibits equal access.	belief that TEACCH “gives in” to autism rather than fighting it; seen by some as an exclusionary approach that segregates children with autism; does not place enough emphasis on communication and social development; independent work centers may isolate when there is a need to be with other children to develop social skills.	may suppress spoken language (evidence is to the contrary).
Errors to Avoid	creating dependency on 1:1; oversteering child or family; interpreting all behaviors as willful rather than neurological manifestations of syndrome; ignoring sensory issues or processing difficulties; failing to recognize when it is time to move to another approach.	failing to offer sufficient training, consultancy, and follow-up training to teachers for program to be properly implemented; treating TEACCH as a single classroom approach rather than a comprehensive continuum of supports and strategies; expecting minimally trained teacher to inform and train all other personnel in TEACCH approach; failing work collaboratively with parents.	failing to strictly adhere to the teaching principals in Phase I; tendency to rush through Phase I or to use only one trainer; providing inadequate support or follow-up for teacher after attending two-day training; training only one person in approach rather than all classroom personnel; inconsistently implementing in classroom.

Autism Treatments

Current Interventions in Autism — A Brief Analysis

	Greenspan	Inclusion	Social Stories
Background	also known as “Floor Time,” DIR (Developmental Individual-Difference, Relationship-Based) Model; targets emotional development following developmental model; depends on informed and acute observations of child to determine current level of functioning; has child-centered focus; builds from the child; “Floor Time” is only one piece of a three-part model that also includes spontaneity along with semi-structured play, and motor and sensory play.	initially intended for children with mental retardation and disabilities other than autism; sociological, educational, and political mandates in contrast to psychology as root source for other approaches; inclusion defined in three federal laws — PL 94-142, REI, and IDEA	also known as Social Scripts; developed by Carol Gray in 1991 initially to help student with autism understand rules of a game; was further developed to address understanding subtle social rules of “neurotypical” culture; addresses “Theory of Mind” deficits (the ability to take the perspective of another person).
Goals	targets personal interactions to facilitate mastery of developmental skills; helps professionals see child as functionally integrated and connected; does not treat in separate pieces for speech development, motor development, etc.	educate children with disabilities with NT children to the maximum extent possible; educate children with disabilities in the chronological setting they would be in if they had no disability and they lived at home; does not apply separate educational channels except under specific circumstances.	clarify social expectations for students with ASD; address issues from the student’s perspective; redefine social misinterpretations; provide a guide for conduct or self-management in specific social situations.
How Implemented	teaches in interactive contexts; addresses developmental delays in <i>sensory modulation</i> , <i>motor planning and sequencing</i> , and <i>perceptual processing</i> ; usually done in 20-minute segments followed by 20-minute breaks, each segment addressing one each of above-identified delays.	children with autism typically placed in inclusive settings with 1:1 aide; curriculum modified to accommodate to specific learning strengths and deficits; requires team approach to planning; approach may be selective inclusion (by subject matter or class), partial inclusion (1/2 day included, 1/2 day separate instruction), or full, radical inclusion with no exceptions.	stories or scripts are specific to the person, addressing situations which are problematic for that individual; Social Stories typically comprised of three types of sentences: perspective, descriptive, and directive; types of sentences follow a ratio for frequency of inclusion in the Social Story; Social Story can be read TO or BY the person with autism; introduced far enough in advance of situation to allow multiple readings, but especially <i>just before</i> the situation is to occur.
Reported Outcomes	teaches parents how to engage child in happier, more relaxed ways; hypothetically lays stronger framework for future neurological/cognitive development.	in <i>certain circumstances</i> , some children with autism can survive and even become more social in classrooms with NT peers; benefits children who cognitively match classmates.	stabilization of behavior specific to the situation being addressed; reduction in frustration and anxiety of students; improved behavior when approach is <i>consistently</i> implemented.
Advantages of Approach	addresses emotional development in contrast to other approaches, which tend to focus on cognitive development; avoids drilling in deficit areas, which feeds child’s frustrations and highlights inadequacies; is a non-threatening approach; helps to turn child’s actions into interactions.	more opportunities for role modeling and social interaction; greater exposure to verbal communication; opportunities for peers to gain greater understanding of and tolerance for differences; greater opportunities for friendships with typically developing peers.	developed specifically to address autistic social deficits; tailored to individual and specific needs; is time and cost efficient/flexible.
Concerns with Approach	does not focus on specific areas for competency; no research to support efficacy for children with autism; approach based on hypotheses, not research; is a more passive approach.	<i>automatic</i> inclusion violates spirit and letter of IDEA; opportunities for successful inclusion begin to plateau by end of third grade as work becomes more abstract and faster paced; increasing use of language-based instruction puts students with autism at great disadvantage; sensory and processing difficulties tend to be insufficiently accommodated; regular education setting not necessarily best learning environment for students with autism; teachers and students in inclusion classrooms are typically ill prepared to receive student.	supportive data is anecdotal rather than empirical; benefit depends on skill of writer and writer’s understanding of autism, as well as writer’s ability to take an autistic perspective.
Errors to Avoid	attempting to implement approach without training or professional oversight; taking the lead, trying to get the child to do what YOU think he should do; allowing inadequate time; attempting to implement in midst of ongoing activities for other children.	providing insufficient training, preparation, information, and support to personnel; placing student in settings where level of auditory and visual stimulation is typically too intense; assigning student work in which cognitive demands exceed student’s ability to comprehend; depending on support of 1:1 aide; maintaining placement in face of frequent or severe disruptive behaviors; focusing on academics to detriment or exclusion of functional competencies; not offering multiple opportunities to apply functional skills.	including too many directive sentences in proportion to perspective and descriptive sentences; stating directive sentences in inflexible terms (e.g., “I will do ___” rather than “I will try to ___”); writing above the person’s cognitive developmental age; using complex language; not being specific enough in describing either the situation or the desired behavioral response.

102. Special Circumstance Aide

A. Rationale

By law, service to pupils who are identified as eligible to receive special education must have services delivered in the “least restrictive environment”. When an IEP team is considering additional support for a pupil, all aspects of the pupil’s program must be considered and reviewed with the intent of maximizing the pupil’s independence in order for the pupil to receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

B. Policy Statement

The Oakland Unified School District/SELPA goal is to encourage, promote and maximize the independence of all pupils. Additional assistance and/or personnel must be carefully monitored for each pupil in order to promote independence in the pupil’s educational setting and within the home and community environment. The IEP team must carefully evaluate to determine if the current levels of support are in place in order for the pupil to make progress toward the identified goals on the current IEP.

C. Administrative Guidelines

1. A pupil’s total educational program must be carefully evaluated to determine if and/or when educational support is needed.
2. Utilize natural supports in the educational environment as well as existing staff in order to promote the “least restrictive environment”.
3. Whenever additional support is necessary due to health and safety emergencies, the Special Education Coordinator must be contacted for immediate direction.
4. A special plan must be developed for each pupil using the required forms/worksheets of this policy.
5. The teacher is responsible for the design and implementation of the pupil’s program including completing and implementing the special circumstances program.
6. The plan must specify the conditions and circumstances under which additional assistance appears to be indicated for a pupil.

7. Every plan must address the following:
 - a. The skills that need to be taught in order for additional assistance to be faded.
 - b. A review of the pupil's support program needs to be monitored on a regular basis in order to develop the appropriate time lines as to when the additional support can begin to be reduced.
 - c. Defining the role of the additional assistant, role of the teacher and any other adult interfacing with the pupil in the educational setting.
8. IEP teams need to be creative in using natural and existing supports to the maximum in the educational setting.
9. The attached worksheets will assist the IEP team in determining whether or not a pupil requires additional assistance.
10. Prior to an IEP meeting, when considering the necessity of a Special Circumstances Aide, the worksheets of this policy need to be completed and discussed at the IEP meeting.
11. If the need for a Special Circumstances Aide is introduced at an IEP meeting, the IEP team members need to be informed of the procedures, which will need to be completed, prior to the IEP team making appropriate decisions. A new IEP meeting needs to be re-scheduled to discuss the results.
12. An Assessment Plan needs to be signed by the parent prior to completing the documentation in determining the need for a Special Circumstance Aide.
13. If it is determined that a pupil requires additional assistance, then the IEP must include the following:
 - a. Goals and benchmarks that address the skills that need to be taught in order for the additional assistance to be reduced or faded in the near future.
 - b. Schedule on going review of the pupil's program, which leads to the fading of the additional support.
14. The IEP form needs to indicate that the pupil does not need special assistance.
15. The Site Administrator will be responsible to ensure the implementation of the Special Circumstances Program.

FCMAT

FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT
ASSISTANCE TEAM

CSIS California School Information Services

FISCAL CRISIS & MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM STUDY AGREEMENT

January 17, 2008

The FISCAL CRISIS AND MANAGEMENT ASSISTANCE TEAM (FCMAT), hereinafter referred to as the Team, and the Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary School District hereinafter referred to as the District, mutually agree as follows:

1. BASIS OF AGREEMENT

The Team provides a variety of services to school districts and county offices of education upon request. The District has requested that the Team provide for the assignment of professionals to study specific aspects of the Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary School District operations. These professionals may include staff of the Team, County Offices of Education, the California State Department of Education, school districts, or private contractors. All work shall be performed in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

2. SCOPE OF THE WORK

A. Scope and Objectives of the Study

The scope and objectives of this study are to:

1. Review the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the District's Special Education program delivery system and provide recommendations for improvement;
2. Identify options and processes needed for the transition of in-home ABA services for incoming 3 year olds to school-based services;
3. Review the District's costs for NPS students and provide recommendations for cost containment;
4. Analyze District staffing ratios within the Special Education Program and provide recommendation for changes, as appropriate;
5. Provide recommendations for ensuring due process while working within the realities of a litigious parent population and limited resources.

B. Services and Products to be Provided

- 1) Orientation Meeting - The Team will conduct an orientation session at the District to brief District management and supervisory personnel on the procedures of the Team and on the purpose and schedule of the study.
- 2) On-site Review - The Team will conduct an on-site review at the District office and at school sites if necessary.
- 3) Progress Reports - The Team will hold an exit meeting at the conclusion of the on-site review to inform the District of significant findings and recommendations to that point.
- 4) Exit Letter - The Team will issue an exit letter approximately 10 days after the exit meeting detailing significant findings and recommendations to date and memorializing the topics discussed in the exit meeting.
- 5) Draft Reports - Sufficient copies of a preliminary draft report will be delivered to the District administration for review and comment.
- 6) Final Report - Sufficient copies of the final study report will be delivered to the District following completion of the review.
- 7) Follow-Up Support – Six months after the completion of the study, FCMAT will return to the District, if requested, to confirm the District's progress in implementing the recommendations included in the report, at no costs. Status of the recommendations will be documented to the District in a FCMAT Management Letter.

3. PROJECT PERSONNEL

The study team will be supervised by Anthony L. Bridges, Deputy Executive Officer, Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team, Kern County Superintendent of Schools Office. The study team may also include:

- A. Bill Gillaspie, FCMAT Management Analyst
- B. Kay Atchison, FCMAT Special Education Consultant
- C. JoAnn Murphy, FCMAT Special Education Consultant

Other equally qualified consultants will be substituted in the event one of the above noted individuals is unable to participate in the study.

4. PROJECT COSTS

The cost for studies requested pursuant to E.C. 42127.8(d)(1) shall be:

- A. \$500.00 per day for each Team Member while on site, conducting fieldwork at other locations, preparing and presenting reports, or participating in meetings. \$500 per day for each independent consultant Team Member working off site on report development and preparation.
- B. All out-of-pocket expenses, including travel, meals, lodging, etc. Based on the elements noted in section 2 A, the total cost of the study is estimated at 15,000. The District will be invoiced at actual costs, with 50% of the estimated cost due following the completion of the on-site review and the remaining amount due upon acceptance of the final report by the District
- C. Any change to the scope will affect the estimate of total cost.

Payments for FCMAT services are payable to Kern County Superintendent of Schools-Administrative Agent.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DISTRICT

- A. The District will provide office and conference room space while on-site reviews are in progress.
- B. The District will provide the following (if requested):
 - 1) A map of the local area
 - 2) Existing policies, regulations and prior reports addressing the study request
 - 3) Current organizational charts
 - 4) Current and four (4) prior year's audit reports
 - 5) Any documents requested on a supplemental listing
- C. The District Administration will review a preliminary draft copy of the study. Any comments regarding the accuracy of the data presented in the report or the practicability of the recommendations will be reviewed with the Team prior to completion of the final report.

Pursuant to EC 45125.1(c), representatives of FCMAT will have limited contact with District pupils. The District shall take appropriate steps to comply with EC 45125.1(c).

6. PROJECT SCHEDULE

The following schedule outlines the planned completion dates for key study milestones:

Orientation:	March 5, 2008
Staff Interviews:	March 5-7, 2008
Exit Interviews:	March 7, 2008
Preliminary Report Submitted:	April 18, 2008
Final Report Submitted:	to be determined
Board Presentation:	to be determined
Follow-Up Support:	If requested

7. CONTACT PERSON

Please print name of contact person: Penny Weaver, Asst Superintendent

Telephone 650 637-4800, ext 1005 FAX 650 637-4811

Internet Address pweaver@belmont.k12.ca.us

Emerita Orta-Camilleri 2/5/08
Dr. Emerita Orta-Camilleri, Superintendent Date
Belmont-Redwood Shores Elementary School District

Barbara Dean February 4, 2008

Barbara Dean, Deputy Administrative Officer Date
Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team

In keeping with the provisions of AB1200, the County Superintendent will be notified of this agreement between the District and FCMAT and will receive a copy of the final report.