

Special Education Ad-Hoc Committee Report February 3, 2017

The special education ad-hoc committee met on Friday, January 27, 2017, from 12:19pm to 1:48pm.

Committee members Anne Sung and Holly Maria Flynn Vilaseca Ocampo were in attendance, along with Mike Lunceford, Trustee; Sam Sarabia, Deputy Superintendent (HISD); Grenita Lathan, Chief Academic Officer (HISD); Hans Graff, Deputy General Counsel (HISD); and Lisa McBride, Board Counsel.

The committee discussed its purpose, reviewed a brief history of educational services in HISD and the 2010 Special Education Program Evaluation, discussed the committee structure, provided input into the RFP scope of work and timeline for the external program review of the special education department which the District is seeking, and discussed next steps.

Next steps: Ms. Lathan agreed to put together a binder for the committee members containing relevant laws and regulations concerning special education, pertinent information concerning HISD's current special education program (i.e. Organizational chart for the department, department budget, process and procedures, acronyms, special education eligibility categories, annual plans and reports), and the 2010 program evaluation. Ms. Lathan also agreed to add teachers to the special education program review bid evaluation team and to submit any notes from scheduled Q&A sessions with principals, teachers and parents concerning special education directly to the Committee at the same time they are submitted to the Superintendent's Office.

The committee proposes the following:

Committee Purpose

In light of the 7-part investigation series done by the Houston Chronicle concerning special education in Texas, the special education ad-hoc committee is convened to:

- (1)** Assess the District's current special education program
- (2)** Review the findings of the Houston Chronicle's recent investigative series on special education as they concern the District
- (3)** Identify strengths and areas for improvement for the District with regards to special education
- (4)** Improve two-way communication between the District and other stakeholders, in particular parents, with regards to special education
- (5)** Report back to the full Board with recommendations

To fulfill the Board's duty to provide oversight for the District, the committee will conduct workshops, host community forums, and provide independent guidance to the process of external review.

Committee Structure

12-15 members including 3 Board members and at least 2 special education experts (1 HISD, 1 external to the district), 3 parents, 2 teachers, 1 principal, and 1 parent advocate. The committee asks each Trustee to make nominations (up to one per category) by February 15. Nominations should include the nominee's name, phone number, email, category, and qualifications. Nominees should be able to commit to active participation in the committee at least through December 2017. The committee will review nominations and provide the board with a recommended list of committee members, with the goal of representing diverse stakeholders in this working committee.

Timeline (subject to adjustment)

February - Committee formation. District will issue RFP for program evaluation. Superintendent conducts meetings with teachers and principals. Special education department begins monthly information sessions with parents.

March - Committee training and workshops.

March / April - Committee hosts community forums.

April - Recommended external review vendor will be presented at Board Meeting for approval. External program review begins.

June onward: Committee will continue to meet, provide oversight to external program review process, hosting workshops and forums as appropriate, and providing monthly updates to the Board.