



NEWS RELEASE

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Santa Clara County Board of Education recognizes inclusion leader Charmaine Warmenhoven; reaffirms commitment “Person-First” terminology

SAN JOSE, CA – The Santa Clara County Board of Education celebrated the many contributions of Charmaine Warmenhoven, longtime friend and benefactor of the Inclusion Collaborative program, at its Feb. 3 Board meeting. The Board also passed a resolution supporting a new Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) initiative that will encourage local media outlets, governing bodies and community agencies to adopt “Person-First” terminology when referring to people with disabilities – a move guided by Warmenhoven’s vision of a more inclusive, caring community for all people.

The Inclusion Collaborative was created in 2004 to protect and uphold the right of students with special needs to access high quality learning and community environments. Specially trained staff promote the successful inclusion of children with special needs in child care, preschool programs, early learning environments, and the community. This is accomplished through professional development for educators and parents; local and statewide advocacy; and an innovative inclusion-centered teacher credentialing program. Warmenhoven, a longtime special education teacher and administrator, emerged as an early champion of the cause, providing leadership and financial support totaling over \$1 million across ten years, covering staffing costs, stipends for attendees of the program's annual symposium, books, training materials and more.

The Inclusion Collaborative has grown to impact preschool, transitional kindergarten and K- 12 programs in 14 counties; five institutions of higher education; 91 school districts and 96 community agencies – impacting an estimated total of almost 1.4 million students and family members in 2015 alone.

“It is virtually impossible to imagine the Inclusion Collaborative succeeding in the scope and scale that it has without Charmaine’s leadership,” said Trustee Joseph DiSalvo. “Charmaine’s vision has expanded beyond the boundaries of Santa Clara County, and is positively impacting the lives of children and adults with disabilities across the state.”

As an advocate for inclusion, the SCCOE adopted person-first terminology as a matter of policy in 2011. For example, a child would be referred to as “a student with a disability,” rather than a “disabled student,” in order to emphasize the child as a whole, and that a disability is not the defining factor in their lives. The SCCOE and Inclusion Collaborative actively encouraged partner agencies to adopt the terminology as part of their organizational values. This effort was so successful that districts and agencies throughout the state adopted the same language and ultimately brought it to the attention of the California State Legislature; today person-first terminology is the standard for all California policies and procedures, in large part because of the initial advocacy of the SCCOE.

The passage of the resolution, marks the launch of a campaign by the SCCOE to encourage local media outlets in particular, as well as governing bodies and other community agencies, to adopt person-first language as an operational norm. To learn more about the importance of person-first terminology, and to fill out an [online pledge of respect for students with disabilities](#), visit the [Inclusion Collaborative website](#). [A detailed account of Charmaine Warmenhoven’s history with the SCCOE](#) is also available.

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