

**RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING NATIONAL SPECIAL EDUCATION DAY AND
EMPOWERING YOUTH VOICES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
RESOLUTION No.2329-1**

WHEREAS, December 2 is recognized as National Special Education Day. This day celebrates the 48th anniversary of the nation's first special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), which was signed by President Ford on December 2, 1975; and

WHEREAS, IDEA makes a free appropriate public education (FAPE) available to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and other related services be made available to the students; and

WHEREAS, IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early interventions, special education, and related services to infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, California, at no cost to parents, provides specially designed instruction to meet the needs and settings that allow infants and their families, preschoolers, students, and young adults to be educated with their peers as much as possible; and

WHEREAS, the California Department of Education (CDE) data (2018-19) states that special education services were provided to 795,047 individuals in Santa Clara County, newborn through 22 years of age; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Clara County Office of Education's (SCCOE) Special Education Department partners with the county's schools to serve students with disabilities from birth to age 22; and

WHEREAS, the SCCOE's Special Education Department provides services to students with disabilities attending court schools, community schools, preschool and pediatric-skilled nursing facilities; and

WHEREAS, other programs that are available through the Special Education Department at the SCCOE include: CONNECT, which promotes college-aged students' exploration of vocational, educational and recreational options through partnerships with local community groups; the Orthopedic Impairments Program, which serves students from birth to age 22 who have a physical, health or neuromuscular disorder that interferes with their access to the mainstream educational curriculum; and, WorkAbility I, which assists students with the transition from school to work, allowing students aged 16-22 to stay in school while developing pre-employment and worksite skills; and

WHEREAS, the SCCOE's Special Education Department also has an Augmentative Alternative Communication/Assistive Technology Team that assists families, educators, and professionals in Santa Clara County with building their knowledge, use, and implementation of Assistive Technology (AT) and Alternative Augmentative Communication (AAC) for students with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the SCCOE operates the Inclusion Collaborative with a mission to promote a culture that values all children by strengthening, sustaining, and ensuring inclusive practices regardless of a student's ability or disability. The Inclusion Collaborative strives to create full access to a quality inclusive learning and community environment; and

WHEREAS, the principle of inclusion is fundamental in providing children with disabilities access to a least restrictive environment (LRE) that fosters their academic and social growth; and

WHEREAS, the SCCOE strives to be "the central active leader and voice on critical education issues" in this county, and believes that this voice should be one of equity, acceptance, and respect and therefore has adopted Person-First Terminology. Using Person-First Terminology by placing the person ahead of their label or disability shows that each person has value; and

WHEREAS, youth voice and advocacy play a pivotal role in shaping policies, programs, and practices related to special education, ensuring that the unique needs and perspectives of students of differing abilities are considered and respected; and

WHEREAS, empowering students with disabilities to actively participate in decisions that impact their educational journey aligns with the principles of self-determination and autonomy; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative to incorporate curriculum and awareness programs in general education settings that educate students about the diverse needs, abilities, and experiences of their peers in special education; thus, fostering understanding, dispelling misconceptions, and cultivating an environment of mutual respect and active inclusion. Such education empowers students to become advocates for inclusion, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of ability, are valued, understood, and integrated fully into the school community and beyond; and

WHEREAS, facilitating regular and meaningful interactions between general education and special education students is pivotal in diminishing any sense of separation and fostering a genuinely inclusive school environment; and

WHEREAS, the SCCOE is committed to improving student equity and access to high-quality education; to providing quality support to districts, schools, students, and communities; and being a premier service organization; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Santa Clara County Board of Education and the County Superintendent of Schools do hereby adopt this resolution to recognize December 2 as National Special Education Day and reaffirms its dedication to promoting the inclusion of Students with Disabilities, upholding the principles of least restrictive environment, and valuing the vital input of diverse youth voices of all abilities in all matters related to education.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the County Board of Education at a meeting held on November 15, 2023, by the following vote:

AYES: President Chon, Vice President Sreekrishnan, and Trustees Berta, Di Salvo, Lari, Mah, and Rocha

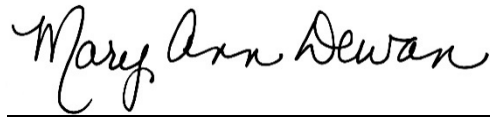
NOES: none

ABSTAIN: none

ABSENT: none



Victoria Chon, President
Santa Clara County Board of Education



Mary Ann Dewan, Ph.D.
County Superintendent of Schools