

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

**SANTA CLARA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
RESOLUTION No. 2452-1**

WHEREAS, December 2 is recognized as National Special Education Day. This day celebrates the 49th anniversary of the nation’s first special education law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education 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 are made available to students; and

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

WHEREAS, Ed Roberts, renowned civil rights leader and champion for people with disabilities, is celebrated as the father of the independent living movement, having transformed personal adversity into a powerful campaign for disability rights; after contracting polio at age 14, Roberts, paralyzed from the neck down and requiring the use of a ventilator, defied societal limitations, first by fighting for his high school diploma despite restrictive policies, then by becoming the first student with severe disabilities admitted to University of California Berkeley, where he organized for accessible education and public spaces, ultimately laying the groundwork for policies and architectural standards that would revolutionize disability access worldwide; 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, 2023-24 data from the California Department of Education (CDE) states that special education services were provided to 29,458 individuals in Santa Clara County; and

WHEREAS, the Santa Clara County Office of Education’s (SCCOE) Special Education Department partners with the county’s school districts 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 offered by the Special Education Department at the SCCOE include the Early Start program, designed for infants and toddlers from birth to age 3, which provides resources and support to promote meeting developmental milestones, the Deaf Hard of Hearing program which supports the language development of English and American Sign Language, the Orthopedic Impairment program which focuses on the development of functional motor skills and independence, and the Medically-Fragile program for students who require extensive support to meet health and safety needs related to chronic medical conditions. Therapeutic programs provide continuous access to counseling

and therapeutic support directly within the classroom environment and the Post-Secondary Adult Transition Program, for students 18-22 years, assists students with the transition to adulthood, including continued education, vocational skills, and independent living.; 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 and families 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 Interim County Superintendent of Schools do hereby adopt this resolution to recognize December 2 as National Special Education Day and reaffirm 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 20, 2024, by the following vote:

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

NOES: none

ABSTAIN: none

ABSENT: none



Maimona Afzal Berta, President
Santa Clara County Board of Education



Charles Hinman, Ed.D.
Interim County Superintendent of Schools