

RE: Agenda Item 2A

2A: Potential Changes to the Accreditation Framework

June 15, 2020

To Whom It May Concern at the CTC,

I write the letter with deep concern for public school students of the Los Angeles Unified School District, especially Black students who are disproportionately affected by the mishandling of the Special Education Department. As a former general education teacher who has taught in two of the highest need schools in the district, Woodcrest Elementary School and 42nd Street Elementary School, I can attest that many students, especially those considered to be "unruly" by principals, were and still are being placed in Special Education classrooms against the recommendation of general education teachers, school psychologists, counselors, and the APEIS. Despite our pleas and whistleblowing, my former colleagues and I were and still are being ignored and silenced by our school's head administrator and directors.

As a direct result of being targeted for speaking up and out, committed educators anchored in social justice either transfer schools or resign from LAUSD completely, as did I, within the first 3-5 years of their teaching career. Simultaneously, principals and directors are empowered to sustain the status quo. I vividly remember being told during a staff meeting, by one of the district's higher ups, that teachers were to refrain from recommending students for Special Education, even if they really needed services. The supposed reason for this was nonchalantly stated as being due to the "system" being "backed up". At that point, we were implicitly and explicitly directed to "contain our classrooms as best we could with what we had". What support did we have? Little to none, especially not in terms of support staff. The schools I taught at, both with predominantly Black student bodies, had extreme difficulty getting and retaining qualified teachers let alone teaching assistants and paraprofessionals. Because of this, educators in general education classrooms had, on average, full classrooms with a minimum of 5 students who required one-on-one support, but who were given no support aide.

In closing, instances like the ones I witnessed in and around the special education department, plagued my teaching experience and continue to harm LAUSD students to this day. If the same things are allowed to continue, the district can only blame itself for knowingly hindering students' access to necessary support(s) as well as a high quality, equal and equitable public education. It is a true atrocity to continually watch students, families, and educators endure such conditions and treatment in Los Angeles Unified Schools. I feel for those who have spoken up and out multiple times to no avail. My heart aches not only for the communities that continue to fall victim to such injustices willfully perpetuated by powerful decision makers in the district, but also for those educators, psychologists, counselors, etc. who feel forced to remain complicit bystanders in order to keep their jobs. That is why I implore the CTC to make teacher support and preparation a priority during the teacher certification process. If this is not done, students with and without IEPs who have the highest needs will keep falling victim to the public education system that is expected to serve their best interests.

Sincerely,

Lyeah Granderson, M.Ed.


Former LAUSD Multiple Subject Teacher