An Advocate’s Guide to Transforming Special Education

Alliance 2018 Summit
Introductions

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Los Angeles

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Silicon Valley
What’s coming up

1. An overview of the key findings and takeaways from the Advocate’s Guide

2. How San Jose parents are leveraging the Guide in their campaign

3. Q & A
Innovate Public Schools: Who are we?

Innovate Public Schools is a California-based nonprofit organization working to make sure that all students -- especially those who have been left behind for too long, including low-income students, students of color and students with disabilities -- receive a world-class public education.

Innovate builds the capacity of parents and educators to innovate and act together to create world-class public schools, and publishes easy-to-understand school quality data and research that highlights both problems and solutions.
We do our work in four geographies:

- Los Angeles
- San Francisco
- San Jose
- East Palo Alto/ Redwood City
Our Mission in Los Angeles:

To dramatically increase the existence of high-quality public schools in low-income neighborhoods of color toward the effort of closing achievement/opportunity gaps, specifically focusing in two target regions (Southeast Los Angeles & Westlake/Pico-Union and Citywide for African American students)
Why do you care about students with special needs?
Why do we care?
Of the 6.6 million students with disabilities in US public schools, too many are falling through the cracks:

**By 8th grade, only 8% are prepared by their schools to read and do math at grade level.**

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**Just 66% graduate high school on time.**

**Less than 50% of those graduates are fully employed two years after finishing school.**
There are unique challenges for parents and advocates who are organizing around special education

- **The special education system is complex**, involving many different entities at the state and local level.
- **Parents are often siloed** into individual struggles, advocating for their own child within a broken system, but with few ways to engage in collective advocacy to transform that system.
- **There aren’t enough resources**. We need our state and federal leaders to give our schools more funding.
The Advocate’s Guide

An Advocate’s Guide to Transforming Special Education

Innovate Public Schools
We designed the Advocate’s Guide for parents and advocates to advocate for **systemic changes** in special education.

We’re a team of educators, researchers, and community organizers and our approach is guided by the **urgency** and the lived experiences of Innovate’s parent leaders.

**Local and national partner organizations** with expertise in special education, disability rights, and district reform guided the development of the Advocate’s guide through consultation, review, and feedback.

Access the full report at: [www.innovatepublicschools.org/specialeducation](http://www.innovatepublicschools.org/specialeducation)
The Advocate’s Guide is fully translated and available in Spanish.
The Advocate’s Guide is designed to empower parent leaders
What Can Advocates Do Together?

- Specific observable “look-fors” and concrete questions to ask to determine if these practices are occurring in your school or district.
- Defines what success in special education looks like in schools and districts.
- Helps parents and advocates prioritize what to advocate for.

**WHAT ADVOCATES CAN DO TOGETHER**

**WHAT TO BELIEVE IN**

- The district or charter school network leaders express their belief that all students can achieve at high levels and act on it that by making sure everyone is responsible for the success of students with disabilities.

**WHAT TO ASK**

- Does everyone in the school system believe students with disabilities can learn at a high level?
- Do they see it in their interactions with students, families, and each other?
- Do they make clear the goals and expectations in the plan to which they hold themselves accountable?

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR**

- District-level or network-level strategies plans include specific measurable goals about improving the performance of students with disabilities, and these are updated on an annual basis.

**WE KNOW WE’VE SUCCEEDED WHEN:**

- The principal/CED, principal special education and general education teachers, staff, and student families believe all students can graduate prepared for college and careers.
- The principal/CED and principal set an educational vision that addresses how to use school facilities and space, and time to support students with disabilities, and makes this a priority for everyone – not just special education specialists.
- Leaders hold all staff accountable for having high expectations for students with disabilities and are equally included in the planning and decision-making processes.
- All school staff use language that demonstrates that the school is an inclusive place and the potential of all students to achieve academic success, and is not just focused in college and jobs. The school is celebrated by all students, staff, and instructional support staff.
- Leaders create a culture where every student feels supported to engage in challenging work, and they regularly discuss each student’s progress.
School Profiles

See what it looks like in action.

KIPP Raíces Academy
A low-income school in Los Angeles where students with disabilities excel.

Lafayette Elementary
This San Francisco Unified school shows what great special education can look like.

Read more Read more
The Advocate’s Guide is centered on the student perspective:

In order for me to thrive, my school must...

- Believe in me
- Include me
- Find me
- Catch me when (or before) I fall
- Meet me where I am and challenge me
- Know me
- Involve me and my family
- Stick with me
Believe in me

Leaders at every level of the system and the school team believe in the potential of all students, including those with disabilities.
Believe in me

___% of **students** with disabilities expected they would graduate with a high school diploma*

___% of **parents** expected their student with a disability to graduate with a high school diploma*

___% of **teachers** believe students with disabilities should be expected to meet the same set of academic standards as students without disabilities**

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**Education Week, National Survey of Public School Teachers, 2003
85% of students with disabilities expected they would graduate with a high school diploma*

___% of parents expected their student with a disability to graduate with a high school diploma*

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**Education Week, National Survey of Public School Teachers, 2003
Believe in me

85% of students with disabilities expected they would graduate with a high school diploma*

59% of parents expected their student with a disability to graduate with a high school diploma*

___% of teachers believe students with disabilities should be expected to meet the same set of academic standards as students without disabilities**


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Believe in me

85% of students with disabilities expected they would graduate with a high school diploma*

59% of parents expected their student with a disability to graduate with a high school diploma*

12% of teachers believe students with disabilities should be expected to meet the same set of academic standards as students without disabilities**


**Education Week, National Survey of Public School Teachers, 2003
Students with disabilities must overcome a tremendous belief gap. This reality is at the center of the Advocate’s Guide.

- **85% of students with disabilities expected that they would graduate with a high school diploma**


- **84% of general and special education teachers did not believe** that students in special education should be expected to meet the same set of academic standards as students without disabilities.

  Source: Education Week, National Survey of Public School Teachers, 2003
Researchers estimate that more than 80% of students with disabilities can meet the same academic standards as other students with the right support.

85% of students with disabilities expected that they would graduate with a high school diploma


84% of general and special education teachers did not believe that students in special education should be expected to meet the same set of academic standards as students without disabilities.

Source: Education Week, National Survey of Public School Teachers, 2003

Students with disabilities must overcome a tremendous belief gap. This reality is at the center of the Advocate’s Guide.
The school team includes students with special needs in general education classrooms during as much of the school day as possible.
Students with disabilities who are included are more likely to graduate within four years

Percent likelihood of four-year graduation in the state of Massachusetts by inclusion status*, from 2005 to 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Type</th>
<th>Likelihood</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensory Disabilities</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-Incidence Disabilities</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-Incidence Disabilities</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Impairment/Neurological</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Disturbance</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Include me

1. Push-in support
2. Co-teaching
3. Flexible grouping
Include me

1. Push-in support
2. Co-teaching
3. Flexible grouping
Push-in support

Co-teaching

Flexible grouping
The school team has a quick, accurate and transparent process for identifying students who will benefit from an individualized education plan (IEP).
The school team regularly tracks every student’s behavioral, social-emotional and academic progress to ensure they don’t fall behind.
Catch me when (or before) I fall

Tiered Instruction: More intensive support for students who need it most

Tier 3
Few Students
- 5% of students receive intensive interventions that target students’ individual needs.
- The school team identifies academic, behavioral, and social emotional challenges that specific students face and monitors how those students respond to interventions.

Tier 2
Some Students
- 100% of students receive more high-quality, research-based instruction.
- As much as possible, teachers differentiate instruction in small groups to meet individual student needs.

Tier 1
All Students

The school team provides supports for students with disabilities yet still engages them in rigorous grade-level content every step of the way.
The school team and families all work together to understand the needs of every student from the student’s first day and track the student’s progress over time.
The school team engages students in decisions about their own learning and engages parents and guardians as equal and important partners in a child’s education.
Given the unique learning needs of students with disabilities, they benefit even more than other students from consistency over time. When school leaders and teachers stay at their school for over time, they develop trusting and supportive relationships with students, families and one another.
The Advocate’s Guide is centered on the student perspective:

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Building Parent-led Organizing Campaigns to Improve Special Education

Innovate’s Organizing Model
Building Parent-led Organizing Campaigns to Improve Special Education

- Unique challenges and opportunities of organizing on Special Education issues
Questions

What are you currently working on? In the chat, share:

- Your organization
- What issues you are currently working on
Building Parent-led Organizing Campaigns to Improve Special Education

- Innovate’s campaign in San Jose Unified
Building Parent-led Organizing Campaigns to Improve Special Education

- Want to Learn More?
  - Potential national conversation and webinar -- Organizing and Special Education led by Corey Timpson, Innovate’s National Organizing Director
  - Innovate’s Parent Leader Institute: Bay Area Feb. 22-24, Los Angeles March 22-24
  - Community Organizer Training Program
Questions?
What’s Next

- Spread the word! Advocate’s Guide Toolkit
- Go deeper with our organizing team on how to leverage the guide in your own campaign.
- Join our Los Angeles work by connecting with us on a local campaign or connect with us to explore a state-level campaign in California.
Access the full report!

www.innovatepublicschools.org/specialeducation
Contact us

Contact us:

Jeimee Estrada - Questions on the guide, about our work in Los Angeles

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Thomas Maffai - Questions on the guide, requests for copies

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Alicia Ross - Interest in San Jose parent campaign

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Corey Timpson - Interest in Community Organizer training program and coaching

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Thank you!
www.innovateschools.org