

SUPERINTENDENT'S SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY COUNCIL MINUTES

November 12, 2025 ~ 9:00 AM

Humboldt County Office of Education – Annex Board Room

Voting Members Present: Luke Biesecker, Regional (Chairperson), No Humboldt Feeder Schools
DeAnn Waldvogel, Northern Humboldt Feeder Schools
Gayle Conway, Northern Humboldt Union High School District
Michael Davies-Hughes, (Parliamentarian) Humboldt County Office of Education
Karrisa Feierabend, Fortuna Area
Julie Giannini-Previde, Northern Humboldt Feeder Schools
Shari Lovett, Independently Reporting Charters
Gary Storts, Eureka City Schools
Becky MacQuarrie, Eureka Feeder Schools
Jeff Harris, Del Norte County Office of Education

Voting Member Absent: Tom Kissinger (Vice Chairperson), Del Norte City Schools
Sarah Purl, Southern Humboldt Unified School District
Jacqueline McCullough Klamath-Trinity Joint USD
Danielle Carmesin, Ferndale/Mattole Area

Non-Voting Member Present: Haley Jones, Humboldt – Del Norte SELPA

Guests Present:	Katie Cavanagh	Lisa Claussen	Laurie Clendenen
	Carol Ingram	John Leonard	Elwira Salata
	April Quincey	Inga Townsend	Paul Ziegler
	Corey Weber	Sarah Poust	Marissa Ambrosini

1.0 CALL TO ORDER and LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Chairperson Biesecker called the regular meeting to order at 9:02 AM with a quorum present. Gayle Conway read the land acknowledgement.

2.0 ADJUSTMENT OF AGENDA

It was moved/seconded by Davies-Hughes/Conway to approve the agenda as presented. Ayes 10, no's 0, absent 5, abstain 0. Motion carried.

3.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

4.0 CONSENT AGENDA

It was moved/seconded by Conway/Davies-Hughes to approve the consent agenda. Ayes 10, no's 0, absent 5, abstain 0. Motion carried.

Action was taken on the following consent item:

4.1 Approval of Minutes – September 10, 2025

5.0 DISCUSSION ITEMS

5.1 Therapeutic Learning Classroom Special Presentation by HCOE

Haley introduced the agenda items and encouraged a robust discussion. Haley advised members to consider the entire SELPA when making all decisions – including all LEAs and Charters in the two counties. Haley shared that the Local Plan is public and on the SELPA website. She mentioned that all SELPAs are unique and the local plan is based on local needs. This SELPA is the only two county SELPA in the state, serving students living in 4 counties.

Per Policy Council request, a special presentation was provided by John Leonard, HCOE special education director. The presentation included the average cost per student enrolled at the Therapeutic Learning Classroom (TLC) and the utilization by LEA. John requested input regarding benefits and concerns from the LEAs hosting a TLC. Gayle Conway from Northern Humboldt shared that funding is a concern, Certified Behavior Support Technicians (CBSTs) are critical to the program - allowing for more flexibility when staff is well trained and can support the classroom teacher. She shared that a benefit of the program is student growth and inclusion in a school community versus being sent out of the county for services.

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Julie Gianini-Previde from MUSD shared that staff members at the school site were surprised by student growth. One concern she raised is the impact on the DOL Dashboard related to suspension and absenteeism data. Elwira Salata shared the provision of a continuum of services is a benefit. However, she feels there is a need for a younger TLC class. Elwira also recommended using current TLCs as learning sites for other districts interested in running their own programs.

John shared that he and Katie visited an elementary TLC program in Sonoma County in the past. There are currently 2-3 districts interested in hosting a TLC for younger students. John shared that for Eagle Point – Northern Humboldt is the only LEA utilizing the program. It is essentially a one district program, but he reminded the council that is likely due to the fact that they are a high school LEA covering a broad geographic region.

John indicated a contributing factor to increased costs is the need for additional staff support – specifically at the middle school TLC. John described the use of ADA to offset the costs of the program. However, if students do not attend regularly, the LEA is still charged for those days. The average cost was about \$24,000 per student paid by districts. John noted the cost was lower at the previous Fortuna TLC, due to lower staffing numbers – however, he reminded the council that the TLC was not successful and was eventually closed.

John reminded the council that with no non-public schools available locally, the TLC fills this critical gap. He compared district charges versus the real cost of running the programs. Michael asked to clarify the cost per student. Julie commented on a cost for this year that was double last year. Carol explained that program costs are based on projections and are likely to change at the end of the year.

Gayle asked why LEAs other than Northern Humboldt are not accessing Eagle Point TLC. In the past, other LEAs utilized the program at Northern Humboldt more often. Haley asked ECS staff and Fortuna staff to share with the group how they are serving students that may have previously been referred to Eagle Point. Lisa Claussen described ECS run programs. The elementary program is in Year 3 and is successful. The middle school program is in Year 2 – she shared it was a difficult first year but is making progress. ECS has also started a high school program which has not been successful and will likely close. This is due to staffing concerns and externalizing behaviors of students. Lisa shared staffing needs to be committed to the success of the program. She shared that ECS would need to serve those students no matter what the cost per student, so they are not as focused on the cost. ECS Programs are staffed with a teacher, Behavior Support Aide (BSA), and support from a school psychologist. ECS is not taking students from other districts into these programs. Lisa indicated the referral process is challenging, even within their own district. Gary shared that ECS has been focused on supporting students in Transitional Kindergarten (TK) who are not school ready. A TLC-like placement would not be appropriate, so they are looking into developing a Bridge class for TK kids. They are seeing increased behavioral support needs in the TK, K, and 1st grades.

Elwira shared her opinion that there needs to be a change in mindset from “wait and see” to being proactive and implementing interventions right away. Fortuna shared that they lean on the Wellness Center for support. They also hire paraprofessionals to support students with higher level needs. Fortuna indicated that transportation is a barrier to the Eagle Point TLC. Del Norte shared that they have 2-3 TLCs (one may be closed soon). One is K-5 and the other is Middle School level. All are in town (transportation is a concern for students living far from town). Their programs are staffed with a teacher, 2 BSAs, 1 SCIA, and virtual Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA). They are funded out of district special education dollars. Luke commented that with the current TLC locations, Klamath Trinity and Southern Humboldt do not have access due to distance.

5.2 Local Allocation Plan Discussion – Out of Home Care Funds

Carol Ingram explained the Out of Home Care (OHC) Funds ending balances year over year and the set aside for Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs), drawing attention to the uncertainty of Proportional Share of Savings revenue. The Policy Council discussed the appropriate use of these funds and considered whether a decrease in fiscal support for TLCs would lead to an increase in the need for RTCs. It was emphasized that these funds need to be accessible to all districts. Currently, students requiring RTC placements are fiscally supported utilizing OHC funds. There are currently two students placed in an RTC from Humboldt County. Carol provided a detailed explanation of OHC funding and clarified that allocations are adjusted for final count revisions in the following year.

There is a sliding scale for reimbursement when students are placed in an RTC, dependent upon LEA size. Carol questioned whether using OHC Funds to offset the cost of the CBSTs is an appropriate use of funds. In response,

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Haley shared that she is looking into the possibility of the CBSTs becoming Wellness Coaches and utilizing CYBHI dollars to help offset costs.

DeAnn raised concerns about increased RTC placements without TLCs available as a continuum of service option. Michael asked if OHC Funds can be used for the TLC program for students residing in their home. Carol confirmed there is flexibility to use these funds for that purpose, given approval from Policy Council. She also explained how Del Norte gets their portion of OHC funding.

Julie expressed there is a need for more TLCs and wondered how they can serve all the students throughout the SELPA. Gayle raised an important question about the role of the Prevention and Intervention department at HCOE, asking if they could collaborate-planning for future structures and programs. Haley emphasized that this is a good idea, given that special education students are general education students first and early intervention is key.

Katie informed the group that based on previous input, there is a recommendation for starting an elementary school program. She stressed the importance of focusing funding on what is currently working. John shared that they are continuing to work with LEAs to start an elementary program. John also shared that many of the County Offices of Education (COEs) that run programs across the state operate on a full charge-back model. He also indicated that LEAs across the state are choosing to run their own programs and no longer rely as much on COEs to provide these services. Katie added that it is common across the state for there to be back and forth between districts supporting their own students or wanting other entities and county offices to support these students. She noted that it is difficult to compare between districts and COEs.

It was noted that there is not necessarily a trend regarding what students end up needing an RTC placement. They do not always go through a TLC first. Gayle shared that they are seeing high numbers of suicidal ideation and extreme mental health needs in their student population. Luke recalled and reminded the group about previous input from Policy Council that they need to fund TLCs that are available to everyone, acknowledging that RTC placements are always going to be needed.

Jeff shared that the Policy Council has been having this conversation for a long time. He drew on his experience with a consortium-type model, giving the example of a consortium for Special Day Class (SDC) programs in another county. He explained that the consortium provides a baseline of services and is based on a straight pass-through for funding. Luke reminded the group that the programs also need to be sustainable, citing the example of the Fortuna TLC that closed. He noted that staff there had expressed frustration that they could not get their own students into the program.

Julie suggested that there needs to be a clear outline for what type of program the classroom is, as not all students will be appropriate for the class. Jeff agreed that establishing criteria for what the TLC is and what it is not, is important. He emphasized that it's also important not to over utilize and fill the program without following the referral process. He suggested clarifying the staffing ratio of the class, for example, one teacher, two aides, and eight kids with trigger language like no more than eleven students. He stressed that when hosting, it should not be about getting "my kids" into the program.

Luke observed that there seems to be consensus regarding the need to intervene for younger students. However, he was not sure that this discussion had provided specific enough feedback to Haley's question, noting that it seems the Policy Council group wants to have everything. Haley concluded by sharing that shifting the AB602 Augmentation funding could be a way of supporting regionalized programs. She is continuing to consult with Anjanette Pelletier from SSCAL, as well as holding a special meeting with the Fiscal Committee and the Special Education Admin Advisory Committee (SEAAC) on ideas for how to appropriately utilize this funding.

5.3 Local Allocation Plan Discussion – AB 602 Funding and Augmentation Funds

Haley explained the need to review the AB 602 funding model and suggested one possibility is to remove the augmentation of those funds slowly over the next several years.

The discussion began with a recognition of the 50th Anniversary of IDEA, with Inclusive Access being a focus. There was a recommendation to look at the funding model more often, with the acknowledgment that the augmentation model can be changed. However, it was noted that changes will result in unintended consequences. The Glen Paul program is part of that discussion, and various ideas were presented, including tiered funding, an

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extraordinary cost pool, and a set-aside for Glen Paul programs and Del Norte. SEAAC and Fiscal Committee will meet and discuss options to bring back to Policy Council.

The group was prompted to share their concerns regarding removing the augmentation. Luke expressed that different districts disproportionately take on costs. He acknowledged that maybe the formula is not perfect, but it's something that has been working. He questioned whether if this incentivizes SCIA's, are they incentivizing the TLCs by funding those classes? Julie would like something that is flexible in the moment. Haley suggested a set-aside for Glen Paul.

Carol shared that 218 students qualified for augmentation, which amounts to 5% of students getting 20% of AB 602 funds. She noted that if augmentation were removed, the Glen Paul cost per student would be more transparent, allowing districts to make more informed decisions about placement. Important questions were raised: Is this what we want to fund? Do we all understand how the funds are being distributed? Is this the goal for AB602 funds? Haley cautioned that creating new criteria for qualifying simply shifts the problem.

Lisa advocated for flexibility in use of the funds, as all the districts have different needs. Haley agreed that all the districts have very different needs, noting that there are about 145 kids in Glen Paul programs. Becky shared that she thinks of some of these funding decisions as insurance policies for programs that she might not be accessing right now but will need for students in the future. Elwira emphasized that the geographic distance between districts is a huge challenge. Luke shared that it seems that most of the students attending Glen Paul programs would be funded through the district rather than a Charter School, as they are often identified at a young age and would not be part of the Charter School enrollment process.

There was a suggestion that a regional consortium could be a way of maximizing SELPA dollars in certain regions of the county. Jeff shared that this has been an idea for 25 years. He said this does not solve the problem of unprecedented student needs and not enough money. He also pointed out the other challenge of inability to hire staff. Jeff agreed that reevaluating the funding model every three years is a good idea. Ultimately, the Policy Council will need to decide, and districts need to take responsibility for their students.

Haley shared that she would come back to the Policy Council with clear recommendations in January or March. Becky shared that she cannot imagine not getting support for the students that are attending Glen Paul programs. Karissa asked if there are priorities. Gary would like to know and understand the fiscal impact of Glen Paul programs. Haley emphasized that there is nothing making them make a change to the AB602 augmentation and that they can take their time and be thoughtful about it. She noted that the TLC funding model is more of an emergency, as the status of the CBSTs are greatly impacted by that decision. Katie shared that regional programs keep students in their community.

6.0 INFORMATION ITEMS

6.1 Director's Report

Haley reminded the Policy Council of the CDE Monitoring Dates and Deadlines, acknowledged the 50th anniversary of IDEA, and informed the council of an upcoming Trainer of Trainers training on Facilitated IEPs. Additionally, Jones shared that staff continue to update policies and support Alternative Dispute Resolution contracts. There were no updates on the Medical Therapy Unit Local Interagency Agreement.

6.2 Legislative Advocacy Updates

Due to the ongoing government shutdown, there was nothing to report.

6.3 Committee Update

6.3.1 Fiscal Committee Report

As fiscal matters were discussed throughout the meeting, there was no additional fiscal report.

6.3.2 Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Report

Haley informed the council that the next CAC meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2025 at 12:00. There is a new member from Pacific Union.

6.3.3 Special Education Administrators Advisory Committee (SEAAC) Report

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Haley reported that the last SEAAC meeting was October 30, 2025. The committee has been looking at the ways students are qualified for services.

7.0 COMMUNICATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

8.0 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- Local Allocation Plan Update
- Policy Updates
- Allowable Cost Matrix

9.0 ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Biesecker adjourned the meeting at 11:21 AM.