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*Coordination to Improve Special
Education Services in Charter Schools:
How State Associations Can Help*

*National Charter School Resource
Center Special Education Conference*

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Agenda

1. Introduction and Background

2. California Landscape: Lessons to Share

3. Charters, Authorizers, SELPAs: The Great Divide

4. State Associations: The Master Facilitators



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Key Factors

Legal Status

- **Independent LEA** for special education purposes
- **Part of an LEA** for special education purposes

Linkage

- **Relationship to authorizer** dictates:
 - Access to funding
 - Service delivery responsibility and decision making authority



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Overview of National Special Education Structures

- **Part of an LEA** for Special Education purposes
 - Total link for funding and services (i.e. CT)
 - Partial link funding and services (i.e. NY)
 - Linkage determined by agreement of parties (i.e. SC)
- **Independent LEA** for Special Education purposes
 - Partial link for funding and services (i.e. MN)
 - No link for funding and services (i.e. OH)
 - Linkage depends on type of authorizer (i.e. MI)
- **LEA status for special education determined by**
 - Charter authorizer type (state board or commission versus local district, i.e. IL)
 - Charter school type (start up versus conversion, i.e. MA)
 - Charter school choice (i.e. CA)



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California: Two Options for Charter Schools

California Charter Schools have two options for special education service delivery and responsibility:

Local Educational Agency

Ed. Code §47641(a)

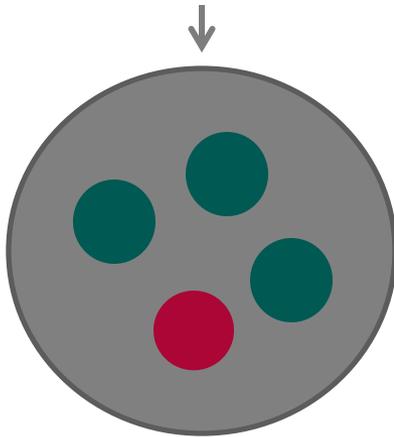
Part of an LEA

("School of the District")

Ed. Code §47641(b)

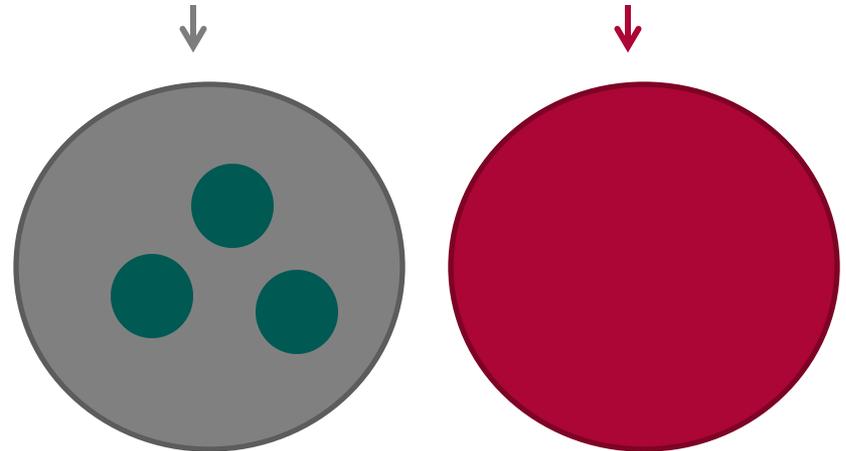
Another look at the Options

Responsibility & Funding



Part of an LEA/
School of the District
(Total Link)

Responsibility & Funding



Independent LEA for
Special Education
(No Link)

 = Authorizer

 = Traditional School

 = Charter School



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California Special Education Structures

Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

Multiple LEAs (or one large LEA) collectively develop a plan for special education

Receives special education funds from CDE and allocates funds to participating LEAs



Local Education Agency (LEA)

Participates in SELPA governance

Carries responsibility for FAPE

Receives special education funds from the SELPA



Schools

Interacts with students and families

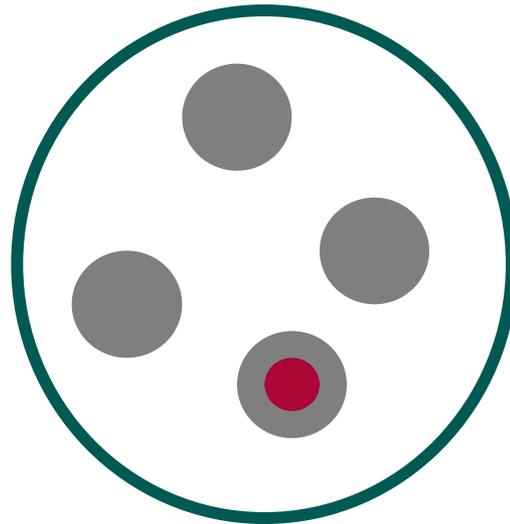
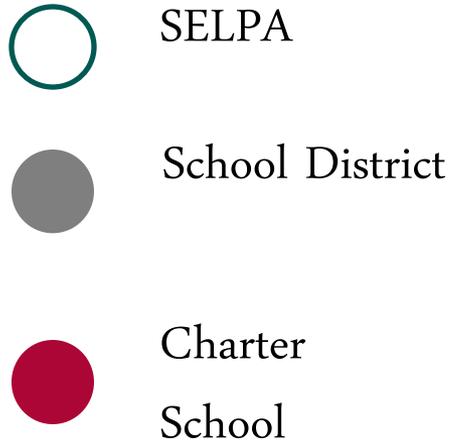
Supports service delivery for students at site

May be required to contribute financially to district costs

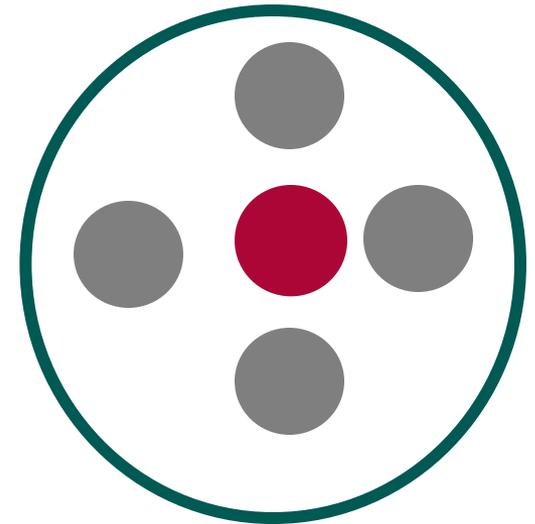


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Another look at the Structures



School of
The District

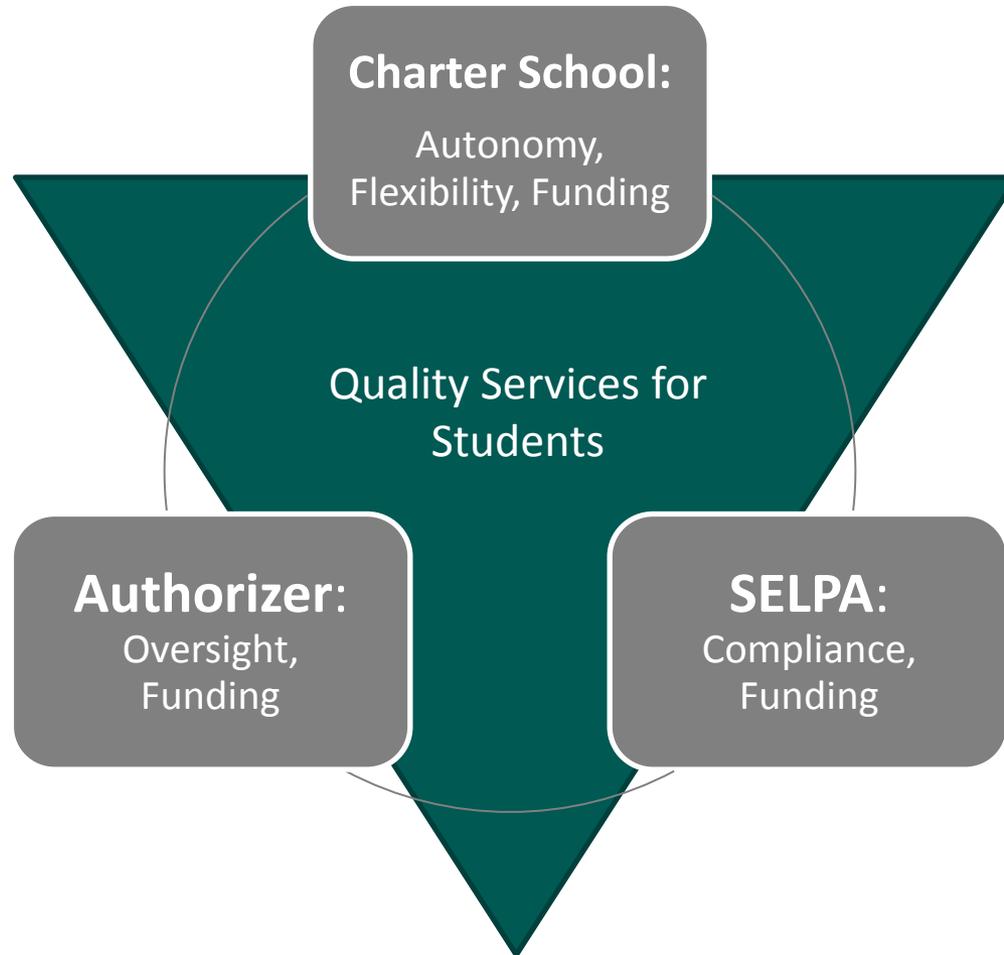


LEA for Special
Education



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The Great Divide: Competing Interests





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Challenges and Barriers

School of the District

- Lack of autonomy and flexibility
- Lack of consistency and quality in services received from the district
- Limited range of services provided at the charter school site
- No access to funding, plus additional “fair share encroachment” fee

Independent LEA

- Limited SELPA options result in difficulty securing LEA status
- Small economies of scale result in difficulty securing services
- Full responsibility results in increased financial risk



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The CCSA Special Education Vision

Expand the innovative, high-quality school choice options available for vulnerable youth by empowering charter schools to:

- ✓ Serve a ***greater number*** of students with unique needs;
- ✓ Provide innovative, high-quality services to a ***broader range of students.***



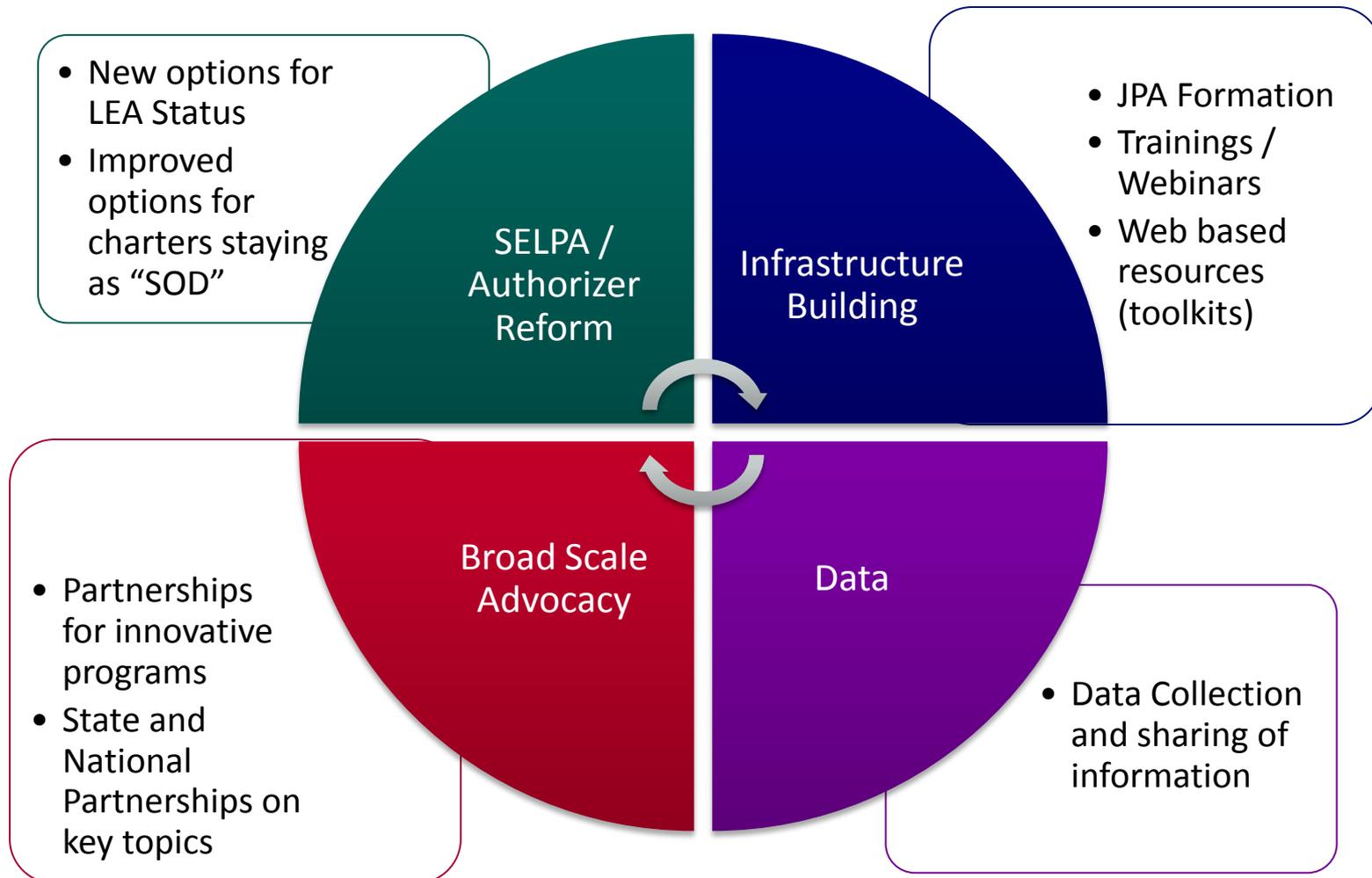
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The CCSA Special Education Mission

CCSA will enable charter schools to provide high quality and compliant services to an increased number and broader range of vulnerable youth, by:

1. Building a special education **infrastructure** in charter schools that includes:
 - A sound understanding of the charter roles and responsibilities
 - Access to a full continuum of services
2. Ensuring that charter schools have **autonomy and fiscal capacity** necessary to provide these services, through:
 - LEA status; or
 - Better options for operating as a school of the district

The Work





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Priority Areas for 2012-2013 Special Education Advocacy Efforts

Funding

- Develop **risk pool and insurance** models
- Expand access to **funding streams**, including Medicaid (Medi-Cal)

Services

- Implement service sharing systems within existing and new **JPAs**
- Expand **resources and training** opportunities

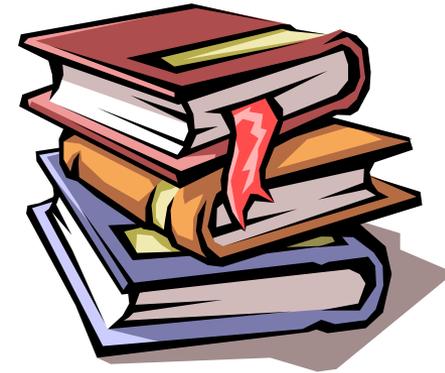
Policy

- Further **parent access** through proposed legislation
- Prevent **authorizer overreach** through legislation, regulations, and/or non-regulatory guidance
- Overcome **service sharing barriers** related to the lottery process

Recent Efforts and Successes

1. Providing information and access to resources:

- ✓ Expanding bank of **online resources**:
<http://www.calcharters.org/operating/special-education/>
- ✓ Ongoing **training** opportunities
<http://www.calcharters.org/events>
- ✓ Pre-screened list of quality **service providers**





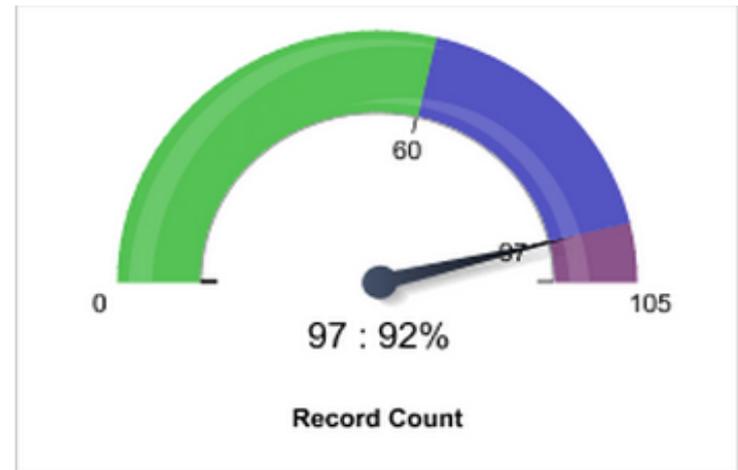
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Recent Efforts and Successes (Cont'd)

2. Building infrastructure and access to quality services:

- ✓ Nearly **100** charter schools are participating in a consortium or joint powers authority (JPA)
- ✓ Formation of **2** new charter school JPAs
 - San Diego County
 - Bay Area

Charter Schools Participating in a JPA/Consortium:



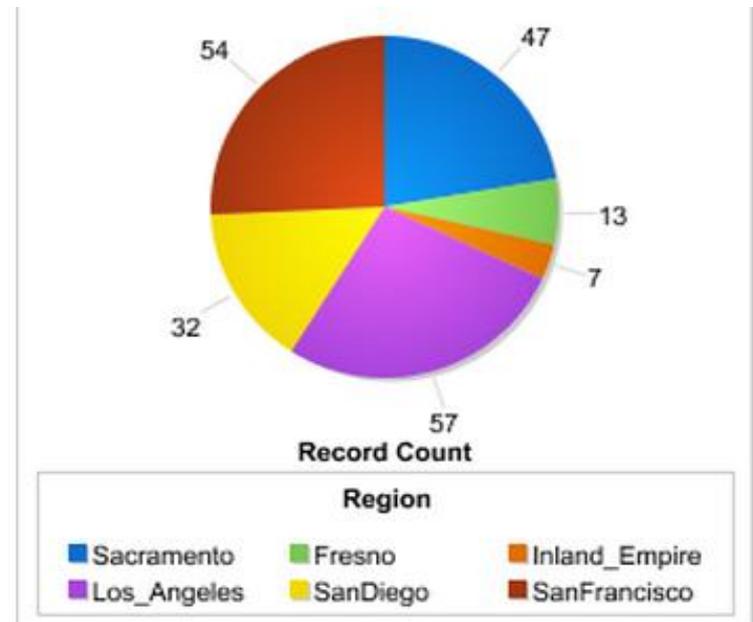
Green=Baseline Blue=2011-12 Progress Purple=# of Schools That Are Members Of A JPA/Consortium Needed To Meet Goal

Recent Efforts and Successes (Cont'd)

4. Exercising Options for Autonomy and Flexibility

- ✓ At least **115** charter schools notified their SELPA in June 2011 of their intent to explore new special education options

Charter School LEAs by Region:



LAUSD : The Great Divide

- Hybrid model:
 - Charters pay LAUSD 27-40% of their special education funding (AB602 and IDEA)
 - Charters provide special education services to students enrolled in their school
- This arrangement presents challenges for both the District and charter school operators
- 93 charters are considering alternate SELPA options for the 2011-2012 school year





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The Goal

Create a viable option for charter schools to remain in the LAUSD SELPA that:

- ✓ Provides charters schools with the flexibility and autonomy to fully operate and be accountable for their own special education programs;
- ✓ Provides charters schools with the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their school;
- ✓ Provides LAUSD revenue from charter operated schools towards administration of special education programs;
- ✓ Allows LAUSD and charter schools to mutually benefit from the programs, services and expertise available in both District operated and charter programs;
- ✓ Builds capacity for charter and District operated schools to serve all students with disabilities regardless of eligibility status

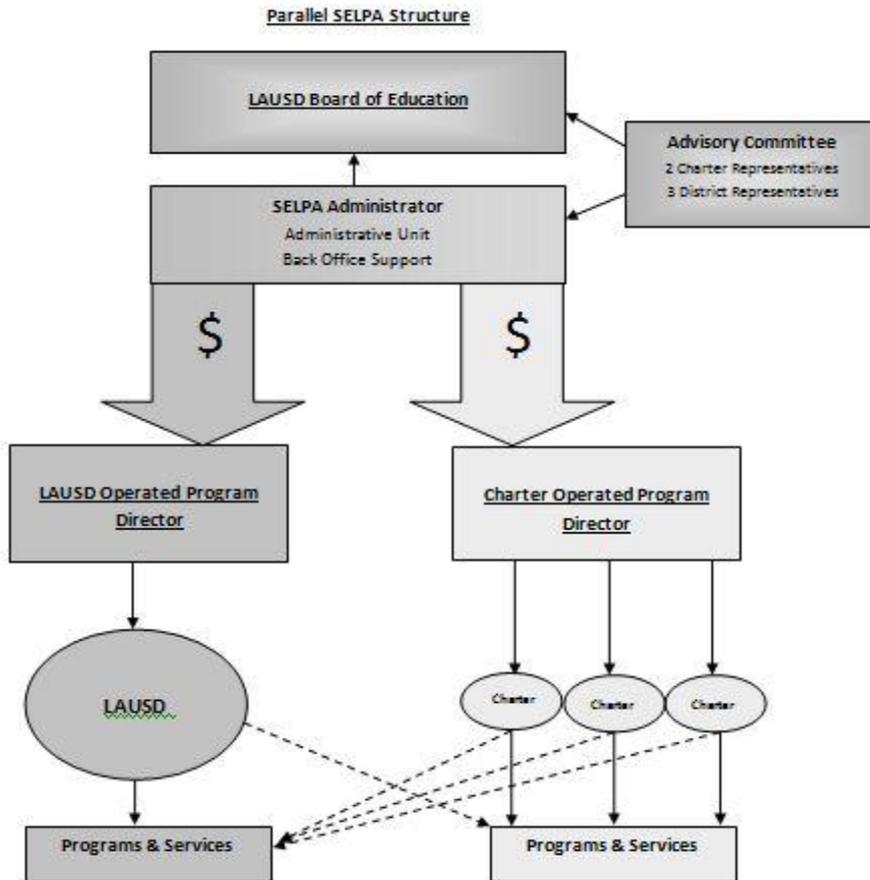
The Process

- 2010-2011- Weekly meetings between CCSA and LAUSD Special Education Administrators, under the directive of Superintendent Cortines

- Discussions focused on creating a new structure for:
 - Governance
 - Funding
 - Service Delivery



The New Structure



- One Single-District SELPA

- Two Sub-groups
 - District-Operated Programs
 - Charter-Operated Programs



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Questions?

Thank you

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