

Name: Natasha La Russa

Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:

Importance of maintaining the LD-SIP program with elementary program review.

I am writing you today in regards to the proposed changes to special education in the elementary school restructuring plan. Specifically the elimination of the LDSIP program. To my knowledge, this is the only program available to support children with learning disabilities in grades 5-8. I believe removing this program would do a great disservice to all LD students.

My daughter is currently in her second year of this program. It has had a significant positive impact on her life both academically and from a mental health/ social perspective.

In her LDSIP class she is able to receive tailored instruction in a relatively quiet and calm environment. She gets real time feedback and corrections from her teacher. She is able to ask for help and clarification and receive it in a timely manner. She can work at her skill level and progress at a pace that she is capable of. Her lessons can be modified and adapted to meet her learning style. As all of the kids in the class have similar needs, she doesn't feel like "the other", that something is wrong with her for having different learning needs.

It is the half day, every day, of small group learning that makes all the difference. This is what has allowed her to see real progress in her learning for the first time in her school career. It has given her confidence in her abilities and a sense of personal worth and value. She feels truly supported in her education for the first time. This incredible and effective learning environment cannot be created with full integration of LD students.

The LDSIP program is not a luxury, it is a necessity for the students that access it. These students have a true disability, not a lack of effort or engagement, and should be treated as such. They need effective and reliable supports from their education system throughout the entirety of their school career to ensure they have the same opportunities for success as their peers, both in school and in life. I believe the LDSIP program achieves the minimum that we should be providing for these students, and to eliminate it would be a great insult to these students and their potential.

In an ideal world this program should be expanded and students should not be limited to 2 years of attendance. Their disability does not get better or go away. Should we not be providing them with the support they need continuously, through their school career?

I am so incredibly grateful that my daughter has had access to this program and am saddened by the prospect of it not being available to students in the future.

My daughter was very dismayed when she learned about the plan to discontinue the program. In her words “ it’s so amazing, it has boosted my learning, boosted my independence, and boosted my confidence! Other kids need it too”.

Thank you for taking the time to read about our experience. I hope you will seriously consider the impact that discontinuing this program will have on students with learning disabilities both now and in the future.

Natasha La Russa