BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:	
PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,	OAH Case No. 2016041016
v.	ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE
BENICIA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.	

On August 22, 2016, a telephonic prehearing conference was held before Administrative Law Judge Charles Marson, Office of Administrative Hearings. Tania L. Whiteleather, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Student. Jan E. Tomsky, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of the Benicia Unified School District. The PHC was recorded.

Based on discussion with the parties, the ALJ issues the following order:

1. Hearing Dates, Times, and Location. The hearing shall take place in the Board Room of the District office at 350 East K Street, Benicia, California, 94510, in a room to be provided by Benicia. It shall take place on August 30 and 31 and September 1, 2016, and continue day-to-day thereafter, Monday through Thursday, at the discretion of the ALJ. The hearing shall begin at 9:30 a.m. the first day of hearing and at 9:00 a.m. on all other days, unless otherwise ordered.

As ordered in the scheduling order, Benicia shall provide a facility for the hearing that fully complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C.A. § 12101 et seq.), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794 et seq.), the Unruh Civil Rights Act (Civ. Code, § 51 et seq.), and all laws governing accessibility of government facilities to persons with disabilities. On August 19, 2016, Benicia certified that the facilities to be used for this case comply with the law.

Prior to the beginning of the hearing, Benicia shall ensure that the hearing room is configured into a courtroom setting and shall have at a minimum (1) a table for Student and his representatives; (2) a table for Benicia's legal representative and special education representative; (3) a table for the witness; and (4) a table for the ALJ, near an electrical outlet. Benicia shall provide drinking water and have tissue available to all parties, witnesses and the ALJ. Unless otherwise ordered, the same hearing room shall be used for each day of hearing and shall be available at least one hour prior to the commencement of the hearing each day. The hearing room shall be locked at lunch breaks and following the hearing each night.

The parties shall immediately notify all potential witnesses of the hearing dates, and shall subpoena witnesses if necessary, to ensure that the witnesses will be available to testify. A witness will not be regarded as unavailable for purposes of showing good cause to continue the hearing if the witness is not properly notified of the hearing date or properly subpoenaed, as applicable.

2. Issues and Proposed Resolutions.

1. Did Benicia deny Student a free appropriate public education in the school year 2015-2016 when it:

a) unilaterally changed his individualized education program from certificate of completion track to diploma track;

b) terminated his enrollment in the Benicia Bridge Program; and

c) awarded or purported to award him a high school diploma?

2. Is Benicia required to provide Student independent educational evaluations in the areas of psychoeducational status, speech and language, occupational therapy and mental health?

As resolutions, Student seeks an order 1) finding that Benicia denied him a FAPE when it removed him from his placement at the Benicia Bridge Program; 2) ordering Benicia to provide independent educational evaluations in the areas of psychoeducational status, speech and language, occupational therapy and mental health; and 3) ordering Benicia to provide compensatory education according to proof.

3. Exhibits. Exhibits shall be pre-marked and placed in three-ring exhibit binders prior to the hearing. The parties shall use numbers to identify exhibits in a way that clearly identifies the party offering it (such as "S1" or "D2"). Each exhibit shall be internally paginated, by exhibit, or all of a party's exhibits shall be Bates-stamped. Each exhibit binder shall contain a detailed table of contents. Each party shall serve an exhibit binder containing its respective exhibits on the other party or parties by 5:00 p.m. on August 23, 2016, in compliance with Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7). At the hearing, each party shall supply an exhibit binder containing its exhibits for use by the ALJ, and a second exhibit binder for use by witnesses. The parties may not serve exhibits on OAH prior to the hearing. In the event of duplicate exhibits, the most legible version will be used.

Except for good cause shown, or unless used solely for rebuttal or impeachment, any exhibit not timely exchanged shall not be admitted into evidence at the hearing unless it is supported by written declaration under penalty of perjury, and the ALJ rules that it is admissible.

4. Witnesses.

a) Each party is responsible for procuring the attendance at hearing of its own witnesses. Each party shall make witnesses under its control reasonably available to the other party. The parties shall schedule their witnesses to avoid delays in the hearing and to minimize or eliminate the need for calling witnesses twice or out of order. Neither party shall be permitted to call any witnesses not timely disclosed except for good cause shown, supported by written declaration under penalty of perjury, and at the discretion of the ALJ.

b) The witness lists of the parties together identify 20 prospective witnesses. It would be difficult to hear all of them in the time allotted for hearing. The parties are encouraged to review and shorten their witness lists prior to the hearing, bearing in mind that evidence will be excluded if it is repetitive, cumulative, or insufficiently probative to justify the time it would take to hear.

c) The parties shall attempt to reach agreement on a witness list for the first day of hearing. Benicia shall have witnesses available in case agreement on a witness list is not reached. Prior to the commencement of the due process hearing, the ALJ and the parties will discuss the length of time anticipated for direct and cross-examination of each witness and scheduling issues for individual witnesses, and the ALJ will finalize the witness schedule. Additionally, the parties shall be prepared at the end of each day of hearing to discuss the witnesses to be presented the next day and the time the testimony of each such witness is expected to take.

5. Scope and Order of Witness Examination. Each witness shall be called to testify only once, except for rebuttal purposes, and all parties shall examine the witness on all issues when the witness is first called. The order in which the parties present their cases in chief shall be subordinate to the need for each witness to appear only once, so the parties shall establish their cases in chief during the first appearance of a witness. After the first direct and cross-examinations, each party shall be limited in examining the witness to only those matters raised in the immediately preceding examination.

6. Order of Presentation of Evidence. In an administrative proceeding, the burden of proof is ordinarily on the party requesting the hearing. (*Schaffer v. Weast* (2005) 546 U.S. 49, 56-62 [126 S.Ct. 528, 163 L.Ed.2d 387].) Here, Student requested the hearing and shall present his case-in-chief first, followed by Benicia.

7. Telephonic Testimony. Whether a witness may appear by telephone is a matter within the discretion of the ALJ. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3082, subd. (g).) At present no party intends to present a witness by telephone. A party seeking to present a witness by telephone shall move in advance for leave to do so, unless the opposing party has stipulated that the witness may appear by telephone. The proponent of any witness appearing by telephone shall provide the proposed witness with a complete set of exhibit binders from all parties, containing all of each party's exhibits, prior to the hearing; and shall

ensure that the hearing room has sound equipment that allows everyone in the room to hear the witness, and the witness to hear objections and rulings.

8. Electronic Recording of Hearing.

a. Audio Recording. Student's request to make an audio recording of the hearing is granted subject to the following conditions: 1) OAH's recording is the only official recording; 2) the recording will be turned on and off at the same time as the ALJ's recording, in order to avoid recording conversations while off the record; 3) no part of the recording shall be played to any witness or potential witness while the hearing is proceeding; and 4) operation of the party's recording mechanism will not be allowed to delay the hearing. If Benicia desires to record the hearing it shall move for leave to do so, and if allowed, shall be subject to the same conditions.

b. Video Recording. No party, witness or anyone else present may make any video recording of any part of the proceedings. Any person doing so shall be subject to sanctions.

9. Motions. Student contemplates requesting a continuance of the hearing in order to retain an expert. Benicia will oppose the motion. Student is encouraged to file the motion as soon as possible. At present no other prehearing motions are pending or contemplated. Any motion filed after this date shall be supported by a declaration under penalty of perjury establishing good cause why the motion was not made prior to or during this prehearing conference.

10. Compensatory Education and Reimbursement. Any party seeking reimbursement of expenditures shall present admissible evidence of these expenditures, or a stipulation to the amount of expenditures, as part of its case in chief. A party seeking compensatory education should provide evidence regarding the type, amount, duration, and need for any requested compensatory education.

11. Stipulations. Stipulations to pertinent facts, contentions or resolutions are encouraged. Any proposed stipulation shall be submitted to the assigned ALJ in written form.

12. Conduct of Counsel and Hearing Room Decorum. Counsel, all parties, and all witnesses shall conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner at all times. Cellular phones, pagers, recorders, and other noisemaking electronic devices shall be shut off or set to vibrate during the hearing unless permission to the contrary is obtained from the ALJ.

13. Special Needs and Accommodations.

At present neither party anticipates the need for special accommodation for any witness or party, or for the services of an interpreter. A party or participant to this case, such

as a witness, requiring reasonable accommodation to participate in the hearing may contact the assigned calendar clerk identified in the scheduling order, at (916) 263-0880, or the OAH ADA Coordinator at OAHADA@dgs.ca.gov or 916-263-0880 as soon as the need is known. Additional information concerning requests for reasonable accommodation is available on OAH's website at http://www.dgs.ca.gov/oah/Home/Accommodations.aspx.

14. Hearing Open To the Public. At the request of Parents, the hearing will be open to the public.

15. Settlement. The parties are encouraged to continue their attempts to reach an agreement before the due process hearing. The parties shall inform OAH in writing immediately should they reach a settlement or otherwise resolve the dispute before the scheduled hearing. In addition, if a settlement is reached five days or fewer than five days before the due process hearing is scheduled to begin, the parties shall immediately inform OAH of that fact by telephone at (916) 263-0880.

IF A FULL AND FINAL WRITTEN SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT IS REACHED AFTER 5:00 P.M. THE DAY PRIOR TO HEARING, THE PARTIES SHALL LEAVE A VOICEMAIL MESSAGE REGARDING THE SETTLEMENT AT (916) 274-6035. THE PARTIES SHOULD ALSO LEAVE CONTACT INFORMATION SUCH AS CELLULAR PHONE NUMBERS OF EACH PARTY OR COUNSEL FOR EACH PARTY. THE PARTIES SHOULD SIMULTANEOUSLY FAX THE SIGNATURE PAGE OF THE SIGNED AGREEMENT OR A LETTER WITHDRAWING THE CASE TO THE OAH AT THE FAXINATION LINE at 916-376-6319.

Dates for hearing will not be cancelled until the letter of withdrawal or signature page of the signed agreement showing all required signatures has been received by OAH. If an agreement in principle is reached, the parties should plan to attend the scheduled hearing unless different arrangements have been agreed upon by the assigned ALJ. The assigned ALJ will check for messages the evening prior to the hearing or the morning of the hearing.

16. Failure to comply with this order may result in the exclusion of evidence or other sanctions.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: August 24, 2016

/s/

CHARLES MARSON
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings