BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of: PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT, v. CARLSBAD UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.	OAH Case No. 2015030156 ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE, GRANTING MOTION TO CONSOLIDATE AND DENYING MOTION TO BIFURCATE

On May 11, 2015 a telephonic prehearing conference was held before Administrative Law Judge Sabrina Kong, Office of Administrative Hearings. Megan Nunez, Attorney at Law, appeared on Student's behalf. Justin Shinnefield, Attorney at Law, appeared on District's behalf. The PHC was recorded.

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

1. Hearing Dates, Times, and Location. Student filed a motion to bifurcate the due process hearing. District filed a motion to consolidate its case with the Student's case. After hearing arguments from both sides, the ALJ denied the motion to bifurcate and granted the motion to consolidate.

Although there is no special education law or regulation that addresses bifurcation of issues, OAH generally looks to civil cases and the California Administrative Procedure Act for guidance. Government Code section 11507.3 of the APA of states, in part:

> (b) The administrative law judge on the judge's own motion or on motion of a party, in furtherance of convenience or to avoid prejudice or when separate hearings will be conducive to expedition and economy, may order a separate hearing of any issue, including an issue raised in the notice of defense, or of any number of issues.

Code of Civil Procedure section 598 contains a similar provision for civil trials:

> The court may, when the convenience of witnesses, the ends of justice, or the economy and efficiency of handling the litigation would be promoted 2 thereby, on motion of a party, after notice and hearing, make an order, no later than the close of pretrial conference in cases in which such pretrial conference is to be held, or, in other cases, no later than 30 days before the trial date, that the trial of any issue or any part thereof shall precede the trial of any other issue….

Although no statute or regulation specifically provides a standard to be applied in deciding a motion to consolidate special education cases, OAH will generally consolidate matters that involve: a common question of law and/or fact; the same parties; and when consolidation of the matters furthers the interests of judicial economy by saving time or preventing inconsistent rulings. (See Gov. Code, § 11507.3, subd. (a) [administrative proceedings may be consolidated if they involve a common question of law or fact]; Code of Civ. Proc., § 1048, subd. (a) [same applies to civil cases].)

The motion to bifurcate is denied because Student failed to show that separate hearings will be conducive to expedition and judicial economy. All dates previously set in OAH Case Number 2015050233, the District's case, are vacated and continued. The 45-day timeline for issuance of the decision in the consolidated cases shall be based on the date of filing of the complaint in Student's case, OAH Case Number 2015030156. The primary case shall be Student's case, and the parties shall use the consolidated caption for all filings as of today, May 11, 2011.

Student requested a continuance of the hearing date based on ALJ's granting of District's motion for consolidation and new documents District provided to Student last week, both of which necessitated more time for Student to prepare for the due process hearing. District did not oppose a short continuance of the hearing. However, the parties were unable to agree to dates. Having found good cause, the ALJ granted a due process hearing continuance from May 18, 2015 to June 29, 2015.

A due process hearing must be conducted and a decision rendered within 45 days of receipt of the due process notice unless an extension is granted. (34 C.F.R. § 300.515(a) (2006); Ed. Code, §§ 56502, subd. (f), 56505, subd. (f)(3).) Speedy resolution of the due process hearing is mandated by law and continuance of the hearing may be granted only upon a showing of good cause. (Ed. Code, § 56505, subd. (f)(3).)

The hearing shall take place on June 29 and 30, 2015, July 1, 2, and 7, 2015, and continuing day to day, Monday through Thursday as needed at the discretion of the ALJ. The hearing shall begin each day at 9:00 a.m. and end at 4:30 p.m. with the exception of the first day of hearing, on which day the hearing shall begin 1:30 p.m., unless otherwise ordered. The hearing shall take place at the District's offices located at 6225 El Camino Real, Carlsbad CA 92009.

District shall provide a facility for the hearing that fully complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.), the Unruh Civil Rights Act (Civ. Code, § 51 et seq.), and all laws governing accessibility of government facilities to persons with disabilities.

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. The issues at the due process hearing are listed below.

Student's Issues and Proposed Resolutions:

a. Did District deny Student a free appropriate public education from September 1, 2014 to February 27, 2015 by failing in its child find obligations.

b. Did District deny Student a FAPE from September 1, 2014 to February 27, 2015 by failing to offer any placement or services to Student?

Student requests that District: 1) reimburse tuition paid to Fusion Academy from September 1, 2014 to the time when Student graduates from high school; and 2) provide an independent neuropsychological evaluation.

District's Issue and Proposed Resolution:

Is Student eligible for special education from September 1, 2014 to May 6, 2015?

District requests that OAH declares that Student is not eligible for special education.

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, but shall place the letter "S" or "D" in front of the exhibit to designate if it is a Student or District exhibit (for example, "S-5, S-6, or D-1, D-2"). 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. The parties represent that they have served their evidence binders on each other 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.

The parties shall exchange resumes or curriculum vitae for each witness who is expected to testify as to their professional credentials.

Except for good cause shown, or unless used solely for rebuttal or impeachment, any exhibit not included in the exhibit lists and not previously 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. Each party is responsible for procuring the attendance at hearing of its own witnesses. Each party shall make witnesses under its control reasonably available. The parties shall schedule their witnesses to avoid delays in the hearing and to minimize or eliminate the need for calling witnesses out of order. Neither party shall be permitted to call any witnesses not disclosed in the party's prehearing conference statement except for good cause shown, supported by written declaration under penalty of perjury, and at the discretion of the ALJ.

The parties are ordered to meet and confer by June 22, 2015, as to the schedule of witnesses and present a witness schedule at hearing pursuant to the example below, to coordinate the availability and order of testimony of witnesses, to ensure that there is a witness available to testify at all times during the hearing, and to ensure that the hearing is completed as scheduled.

Example:

The following witnesses will be called to testify on June 22, 2015:

1. Jane Smith at 1:30 p.m.
2. Bob Jones at 3:00 p.m.

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.

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 of Witness Examination. 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. 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).) Any 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 the witness 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. No witness will be heard by telephone unless all these requirements have been fulfilled.

7. Timely Disclosure of Witnesses/Exhibits. Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7), provides for disclosure of witnesses and exhibits at least five business days prior to the hearing.

8. Order of Presentation of Evidence. The order of presentation of evidence shall be as follows: Student's evidence followed by District's evidence. However, witnesses to be called by both sides shall be questioned on all issues when first called.

9. Motions. Student's attorney represented that she filed a motion to amend the complaint shortly before the PHC which neither the ALJ nor the District's attorney had seen. Therefore, the ALJ did not rule on Student's motion to amend the complaint at the PHC. Student also filed a motion to continue the due process hearing on May 11, 2015. Student withdrew the motion to continue the due process hearing at the PHC upon ALJ's granting a continuance of the due process hearing to June 29, 2015, as set forth in paragraph one above. Student will be filing a motion for change of due process hearing venue, a motion to shift the burden of proof from Student to District, and a motion to object to Student being called as a witness. District may be filing a motion to quash Student's subpoenas that District has not seen by the time of the PHC. Any motion filed after today, other than those listed in this paragraph, shall be supported by a declaration under penalty of perjury establishing good cause as to why the motion was not made prior to or during the May 11, 2015 PHC.

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

11. 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.

12. Compensatory Education/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.

13. Special Needs and Accommodations. At present neither party anticipates the need for special accommodation for any witness or party, or for translation services. 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 at (916) 263-0880, the OAH ADA Coordinator at OAHADA@dgs.ca.gov, or (916) 263-0880 as soon as the need is made 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 is Open To the Public at Student's request.

15. Settlement. The parties are encouraged to continue working together 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 within five days of the scheduled start of the due process hearing, the parties shall also inform OAH of the settlement 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 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.

If the matter settles subject to board approval, in addition to a signed copy of the signature page of the settlement agreement as noted above, the parties shall submit a request for a status conference and provide the date of the next board meeting. The hearing dates will not be cancelled without this information.

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

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATE: May 11, 2015

/s/

SABRINA KONG
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings