BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

PARENTS ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

LAGUNA BEACH UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2025040200

ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE FOR HEARING BY VIDEOCONFERENCE

JULY 25, 2025

On July 25, 2025, Administrative Law Judge Ted Mann, Office of Administrative Hearings, held a prehearing conference by videoconference. The Administrative Law Judge is called an ALJ. The Office of Administrative Hearings is called OAH. The prehearing conference is called a PHC.

Student's mother, called Parent, appeared on behalf of Student as a self-represented party. Jennifer Fant, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Laguna Beach Unified School District. The PHC was recorded. Based upon discussion with the parties, the ALJ issues the following order:

HEARING DATES, TIMES, AND LOCATION

DUE PROCESS HEARING

The hearing will take place on August 5, 2025 through August 7, 2025, and continue day to day at the discretion of the ALJ. The hearing shall begin at 9:30 AM each day and generally end at 3:30 PM, unless otherwise ordered. The parties anticipate it will take up to 4 to 5 days to complete the hearing. Parent will be unavailable beginning on August 8, 2025 for one or more weeks for a medical procedure. If additional days are needed, additional hearing dates will be discussed with the ALJ during the hearing.

At the beginning of the due process hearing, Issue 1 related to waiver of free appropriate public education, called a FAPE, issues prior to October 5, 2025, will be heard first and evidence will be taken only on that issue. Once evidence has been submitted on Issue 1, the ALJ will pause the hearing to consider the evidence and then rule from the bench regarding Issue 1. Following that ruling, the remaining Issues numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 will be heard by the ALJ.

HEARING LOCATION

OAH is authorized to conduct due process hearings by videoconference or telephone. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3082, subd. (g).) OAH will conduct the due process hearing by videoconference using the Zoom application. Unless otherwise ordered, participants are required to appear by videoconference using computer or device with video capability and Zoom.

The parties shall immediately notify all potential witnesses of the hearing dates and shall subpoena witnesses, if necessary, to ensure that the witnesses will appear to

testify. A party's failure to notify or subpoena a witness to testify will not be considered good cause to continue the hearing. Instructions for issuing and responding to subpoenas and optional forms for subpoenas can be found on the website at https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Case-Types/Special-Education/Forms/Subpoenas?search=special%20education%20subpoena.

ISSUES AND PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

The issues at the due process hearing, and proposed resolutions, as alleged in the complaint and clarified by the parties and the ALJ during the PHC are:

ISSUES

1. Does the series of Settlement Agreements between Student and Laguna Beach preclude Student's FAPE claims prior to October 5, 2024?
2. Did Laguna Beach deny Student a FAPE by failing to provide Student an appropriate program and services from April 3, 2023 through April 28, 2025 in the following areas:
    a. academics;
    b. auditory;
    c. visual;
    d. goals in the areas of:
        i. auditory needs;
        ii. visual needs; and
        iii. social needs; and
    e. eye tracking accommodations?
3. Did Laguna Beach deny Student a FAPE by failing to offer Student an in-district placement from April 3, 2023 through April 28, 2025?

4. Did Laguna Beach deny Student a FAPE by offering an inappropriate placement below Student's academic ability from April 3, 2023 through April 28, 2025?
5. Did Laguna Beach deny Student a FAPE by failing to complete an auditory processing assessment of Student from April 3, 2023 through April 28, 2025?
6. Did Laguna Beach's procedural violations regarding the triennial assessment, dated May 17, 2023, deny Student a FAPE by:
    a. Conducting the assessment while Student was ill and hospitalized;
    b. Excluding Parent from the majority of testing sessions during the assessment; and
    c. Not consulting Parent on the selection of assessment tools for the assessment?
7. Did Laguna Beach's procedural violations deny Student a FAPE by denying repeated independent educational evaluation requests, including failing to provide prior written notice of the denials, from April 3, 2023 through April 28, 2025?

Student's original Issue 4, related to allegedly coercive settlement agreements, and Issue 5, related to alleged retaliation and hostile communication, were dismissed by separate order by OAH on July 24, 2024. The issues have been reworded and renumbered for clarity within the discretion of the Administrative Law Judge. (*M.C. v. Antelope Valley Union High Sch. Dist.* (9th Cir. 2017) 858 F.3d 1189 .(*M.C*).) No change in substance has been made. Parties are to notify OAH in writing, prior to the hearing, if the foregoing issues are not consistent with their understanding of the issues as discussed at the PHC.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

The resolutions requested by Student include individual educational evaluations in multiple areas, placement in a rigorous academic program, compensatory education, and reimbursement of educational expenses.

Laguna Beach filed its response to Student's complaint on June 16, 2025. (*M.C. , supra, at* 858 F.3d 1189, 1199-1200.)

EXHIBITS

The parties shall serve their exhibits on each other in compliance with Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7). The parties shall upload their exhibits electronically according to the Order Setting Procedures for Filing Exhibits Electronically. The exhibits must be uploaded to Case Center only. Exhibits are not to be filed with OAH through the SFT system or with OAH by any other means than Case Center. Invitations to Case Center have already been sent to the parties and they have confirmed receipt of those Case Center invitations. If any party is unable to use their current invitation to upload exhibits to Case Center they are to immediately contact OAH and the invitation can be reissued. Timely uploading electronic hearing exhibits five business days before the first day of hearing constitutes that party's timely exchange of evidence in compliance with Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7). If further assistance is needed, please contact OAH at OAHSEOps@dgs.ca.gov.

Except for good cause shown, or unless used solely for rebuttal or impeachment, any exhibit not timely exchanged as required by Education Code section 56505, subdivision (e)(7) shall not be admitted into evidence at the hearing unless the ALJ rules that it is admissible.

IDENTIFYING EXHIBITS AND PAGE NUMBERS

Each exhibit must be identified by a letter and number. Student must use the letter S before the number to identify Student's exhibits. Laguna Beach must use the letter D before the number to identify Laguna Beach's exhibits. For example, S-1 means Student's exhibit 1 and D-1 means Laguna Beach's exhibit 1. A cover sheet with this identifying letter and number should be the first page of each exhibit. The electronic evidence program will automatically number the exhibits and additional page numbering or bates stamping should not be added.

CONTENT

Each exhibit must consist of one document. Separate documents may not be combined into one exhibit. Emails may be consolidated into one exhibit if they are part of a single chain of messages, that is a series of messages back and forth on a single topic over a limited time period. Exhibits should be in chronological order.

Parties should include resumes or curriculum vitae for each witness expected to testify as an expert.

Laguna Beach's exhibits must include a copy of the school calendar for each school year in question.

Electronic copies of exhibits filed with OAH shall be filed by 5:00 PM at least five business days before the first day of hearing. Please refer to the General Order OAH issued with the Scheduling Order that contains the Order Setting Procedures for Filing Exhibits Electronically. It includes instructions for how to file exhibits electronically. Beginning three business days before the hearing, the electronic evidence system will

not allow parties to upload exhibits unless permitted by the ALJ during the hearing at the ALJ's discretion.

WITNESSES

The parties shall serve their list of witnesses on each other in compliance with Education Code section 56505. No 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.

Parties are responsible for ensuring that all participants are familiar with and follow the Instructions for Joining the Online Due Process Hearing provided with this Order. Participants who have not previously used the Zoom application, may find informative instructions by visiting, Getting Started with Zoom at https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697.

The parties are responsible for ensuring that witnesses join the virtual hearing room at the designated date and time to testify. Witnesses are required to join the due process hearing by computer and appear by videoconference unless they do not have the necessary computer equipment. If a witness does not have the necessary equipment, the ALJ may permit the witnesses to appear by audio only or by telephone. "Audio only" means using a computer without video. A witness's inability to attend the hearing by videoconference will be discussed at the start of the hearing.

The parties are responsible for producing their own witnesses unless otherwise ordered by the ALJ. Parties shall make witnesses under their control reasonably available. The parties must schedule their witnesses to avoid delays in the hearing and to minimize or eliminate the need for calling witnesses out of order.

The ALJ has discretion to limit the number of witnesses and the time allowed for testimony. Education Code, section 56505.1, subdivision (h), empowers the ALJ to set a reasonable limit on the length of the hearing after consideration of four factors. The first two factors are the issues to be heard and the complexity of facts to be proven. The second two factors are the ability of the parties or their representatives to present their respective cases and the parties' estimates of the time needed to present their cases.

MEET AND CONFER

The parties are encouraged to review and shorten their witness and exhibit lists before the hearing. Evidence may be excluded if it is repetitive, cumulative, or insufficiently probative to justify the time it would take to hear.

The parties have agreed to meet and confer at noon on Thursday, July 31, 2025, to discuss scheduling witnesses and how much time each witness will take. The parties shall discuss any issues related to counsel and witnesses appearing by videoconference for hearing, electronically viewing exhibits during the hearing, and subpoenas, if any. The parties should attempt to eliminate duplicate exhibits from their hearing exhibits. The parties shall discuss whether they can produce a written stipulation as to pertinent facts, contentions, resolutions and the authenticity and admissibility of documents to shorten the length of time needed for the hearing. The parties shall discuss the handling and usage of video recordings that Student intends to offer as evidence at hearing.

As part of the meet and confer process, Laguna Beach shall inform Student which proposed witnesses are District employees. Laguna Beach will also advise Parent which of the district's employees that can be made available for hearing by Laguna Beach. Laguna Beach shall also identify the witnesses on Student's list that require a subpoena.

Laguna Beach may agree to accept service for a witness under Laguna Beach's control or provide Student with the witness's most recent contact information.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION FORM

Both parties have an ongoing obligation to ensure that OAH has current information on the Participant Information Form filed with OAH and shall file an updated Form as necessary. The Participant Information Form is not served upon the opposing party. The ongoing obligation to ensure that the Participant Information Form filed with OAH is current does not change the parties' statutory obligation to timely disclose their witnesses to the other party(s) at least five business days prior to hearing. The parties must file an updated Participant Information Form to inform OAH of any changes, additions, or deletions, including the required information no later than 5:00 PM at least two business days before the first day of hearing.

Any contact information provided shall be used for the limited purpose of issuing subpoenas or for contacting a witness to attend the hearing. Any contact information shall not be disclosed to any other person.

EVIDENCE PRESENTATION

In an administrative proceeding, the burden of proof is ordinarily on the party requesting the hearing. (*Schaffer v. Weast* (2005) 546 U.S. 49, 62.) In this case Student requested the hearing and bears the burden of proof. Student's case-in-chief shall be presented first, followed by Laguna Beach, unless otherwise ordered.

WITNESS LISTS

The parties must provide a joint proposed witness list to the ALJ on the first day of hearing. The list should include the first and last name of the witness, which party is

calling the witness to testify, and include dates and time estimates of each witness's expected testimony. In the event an agreement cannot be reached, each party shall prepare a separate written list. Student must have witnesses available in case there is no agreement.

At the beginning of the hearing, the ALJ and the parties will discuss the length of time anticipated for each witness and scheduling issues for individual witnesses. The ALJ will finalize the witness schedule. Parties must be prepared at the end of each day to discuss the witnesses to be presented the next day and the estimated time for the testimony of each witness.

SCOPE OF WITNESS EXAMINATION

Each witness will be called to testify only once, except for rebuttal purposes. All parties must examine a witness on all issues when the witness is first called to testify. Requiring a witness to appear only once takes priority over the order in which parties present their case-in-chief. If a witness is called by Student, Student will question the witness first, followed by Laguna Beach, and continuing back and forth until questioning has been completed. For witnesses called by Laguna Beach, the order will be reversed. Parent will testify by narrative regarding the facts and opinions they want to present to the ALJ as evidence. Laguna Beach will then have the opportunity to cross-examine Parent, and continuing back and forth until questioning has been completed.

AUDIO ONLY OR TELEPHONIC TESTIMONY

Whether a witness may appear by audio only or telephone instead of videoconference 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 audio only or telephone shall request permission to do so before the hearing. Any party seeking to present a

witness who cannot access exhibits electronically must inform the ALJ at the beginning of the hearing.

ELECTRONIC RECORDINGS

AUDIO RECORDING

A party may request permission to make an audio recording of the hearing. Permission to make an audio recording is subject to the ALJ's discretion and based upon the following conditions:

1. the OAH recording is the only official recording;
2. the parties shall turn their recording device on and off at the same time that the ALJ is on and off the record to avoid recording conversations while off the record;
3. operation of the party's recording mechanism will not be allowed to delay the hearing;
4. a party's recording may not be given, provided or played to a witness, or potential witness;
5. the recording is subject to the same confidentiality as the due process hearing; and
6. participants shall not take screenshots of the videoconference nor share or publish any portion of the videoconference or audio recording.

Student's and District's requests to make an audio recording of the hearing are granted subject to the foregoing conditions.

VIDEO RECORDING

No party, witness or anyone else may video record any part of the proceedings or stream live through any means.

RECORDINGS AS EXHIBITS

Recordings may not be uploaded electronically without the ALJ's permission. The ALJ has discretion to admit or exclude evidence in the form of a recording. Any request to submit a recording shall be considered at the time of hearing. Student indicated at the PHC that Student intends to offer video recordings as evidence at hearing. As noted, above, the parties were directed to meet and confer on the usage of video recordings at hearing. All video recordings sought to be used at hearing must meet legal standard for admissibility, including but not limited to authenticity, reliability and relevance.

The ALJ may grant or deny the request or grant the request subject to certain conditions. The party offering the recording must establish that all or a part of the recording is relevant. The ALJ may request a transcript of the portion of the recording requested or have the party offering the recording to provide an exact identifiable portion of the recording the party seeks to admit. The identities of any person speaking on the portion of the tape being introduced must be established. An ALJ may allow the opposing party to offer additional portions of a recording to establish the context, or to rebut, the recording.

COMPENSATORY EDUCATION OR REIMBURSEMENT

Any party seeking reimbursement for expenditures shall present admissible evidence of these expenditures, or a stipulation to the amount of the expenditures. A

party seeking compensatory education should provide evidence regarding the type, amount, duration, and need for any requested compensatory education. Documents offered as evidence to support a request for reimbursement must be separated by vendor.

MOTIONS

On July 23, 2025, Student filed a Motion for Reconsideration of Emergency Relief Denial. An Order addressing Student's Motion for Reconsideration will be issued separately. No other prehearing motions are pending or contemplated. Any motion that was not filed three business days before the PHC, shall be supported by a declaration under penalty of perjury establishing good cause why the motion was not timely filed.

STIPULATIONS

Stipulations to pertinent facts, contentions, resolutions and authenticity and admissibility of documents are encouraged. Any proposed stipulation shall be submitted to the assigned ALJ in writing prior to the start of the hearing.

CONDUCT OF PARTICIPANTS AND HEARING ROOM DECORUM

All participants to the videoconference should observe the same decorum as in an in-person due process hearing. Participants must conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner at all times. Cellular phones, telephones and computer notifications must be shut off or set to silent during the hearing unless the ALJ grants permission otherwise. Participants should appear from a private location, unless otherwise ordered. Participants should take reasonable efforts to minimize background noise and maintain adequate room lighting. Use of virtual background

images are at the discretion of the ALJ. Witnesses are prohibited from reading exhibits, documents, notes, text messages, telephones or computers while testifying, unless permitted to do so by the ALJ. The parties, their representative and witnesses are prohibited from passing notes to, exchanging electronic messages with, or signaling the witness in any way while the witness is testifying.

LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

At the PHC, neither party requested an accommodation or language interpreter.

A party or participant in this case, such as a witness, requiring reasonable accommodation to participate in a mediation or hearing may contact OAH at (916) 263-0880, or send an email to OAHADA@dgs.ca.gov as soon as the need is known. The e-mail should have "Request for Accommodation" in the Subject Line. Additional information concerning requests for reasonable accommodation is available on OAH's website at: https://www.dgs.ca.gov/OAH/Services/Page-Content/Office-of-Administrative-Hearings-Services-List-Folder/Request-Reasonable-Accommodations-for-OAH-Legal-Proceedings.

HEARING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

The hearing is open to the public. Special education hearings are closed to the public unless a student requests the hearing to be open to the public.

Either party may forward the hearing invitation to observers. Observers will only be admitted to the hearing at the beginning of the hearing day and after the lunch break. Observers do not need to identify themselves but must have respectful usernames when joining the hearing. Prospective witnesses may not observe the hearing until their testimony is completed and with the ALJ's permission.

By choosing an open hearing, Student is on notice that highly sensitive personal information will be seen and heard by observers.

The following order applies to observers:

1. Microphone and video must always be off unless otherwise ordered by the ALJ.
2. Hearing observers will not be allowed to record, photograph or broadcast the hearing. (California Rules of Court, rule 1.150.) Any person who suspects that a member of the public is violating this rule must immediately report the violation to the ALJ.
3. An ALJ may exclude persons whose actions impede the orderly conduct of the hearing, restrict attendance because of the physical or electronic limitations of the hearing facility, or take other action to promote due process or the orderly conduct of the hearing. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 1, § 1030, subd. (e).)
4. An ALJ may order an open hearing to be closed, or to make other protective orders to the extent necessary or proper to ensure a fair hearing in the circumstances of the case, including to protect a minor witness or a witness with a developmental disability. (Gov. Code § 11425.20, subd. (a).)

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 if 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. At the same time, the parties should send the signature page of the signed agreement or a letter withdrawing the case to OAH by visiting OAH Secure e-file at https://www.applications.dgs.ca.gov/oah/oahsftweb.

If a full and final written settlement agreement is reached after 4:00 PM 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.

Dates for hearing will not be cancelled until the letter of withdrawal or signature page of the signed agreement has been received and processed 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 before the hearing.

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

FAILURE TO COMPLY

The failure to comply with this Order may result in the exclusion of evidence or other sanctions.

ORDER INCLUDES ALL RULINGS

This Order includes all rulings made at the prehearing conference. Any discussion and conversation not referenced in this Order is not binding on the ALJ conducting the hearing and may not be relied upon by the parties. The parties should

be aware that, at hearing, the ALJ conducting the hearing has discretion to reconsider any part of this Order.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Ted Mann

Ted Mann
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings