BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

PARENTS ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

SAN LORENZO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2022060534

ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING CONFERENCE FOR HEARING BY VIDEOCONFERENCE GRANTING MOTION TO DISMISS AND DENYING MOTION TO COMPEL

OCTOBER 11, 2022

On October 10, 2022, Administrative Law Judge Rita Defilippis, 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.

Attorney Robin Miller appeared on behalf of Student. Attorney Alejandra Leon appeared on behalf of San Lorenzo 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 October 18, 19, and 20, 2022, 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 8 days to complete the hearing. Additional hearing dates will be discussed with the ALJ during the hearing.

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.

MOTION TO DISMISS

San Lorenzo moved to dismiss Issues 9, 10, and 11 of Student's complaint during the prehearing conference for lack of jurisdiction, as the issues assert claims under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Student responded that the issues were raised for the purpose of exhaustion and acknowledged that OAH lacks jurisdiction to hear the issues.

OAH does not have jurisdiction to entertain claims based on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 701 et seq.), Section 1983 of Title 42 United States Code, the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 1201 et seq.; or the Unruh Civil Rights Act (Civ. Code, § 51). Student's Issues 9, 10 and 11 allege violations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Accordingly, San Lorenzo's Motion to Dismiss Student was granted.

MOTION TO COMPEL

On October 5, 2022, Student filed a Motion to Compel San Lorenzo to file a more definitive Response to Student's Due Process Complaint. Specifically, Student alleged that San Lorenzo's response to Student's complaint did not sufficiently respond to Student's issue regarding San Lorenzo's alleged failure to fund and complete an independent educational evaluation. On October 10, 2022, San Lorenzo filed an opposition to student's Motion to Compel and a response to Student's amended complaint. The motion was heard and discussed at the prehearing conference.

The IDEA requires a school district to respond to a parent's due process complaint within 10 days. (20 U.S.C. §§ 1415(c)(2)(B)(i)(I) & 1415(c)(2)(B)(ii), *M.C. v. Antelope Valley Union High School Dist.* (9th Cir. 2017) 858 F.3d 1189, 1199-1200.)

Student conceded that San Lorenzo responded to Student's complaint in writing and subsequently filed its response with OAH on October 10, 2022. San Lorenzo's filed response to Student's complaint listed Student's issue regarding the independent educational evaluation and expressly stated that it denied the allegation. San Lorenzo's response included attachments of email communications from San Lorenzo's counsel to Student's counsel in response to Student's Motion to Compel, and request for more specificity. Specifically, on October 6, 2022, San Lorenzo informed Student of San Lorenzo's position that because the evaluation to which Student objected was not performed by San Lorenzo, it did not have any legal obligation to fund the independent educational evaluation.

At the prehearing conference, Student's counsel was asked if she wished to proceed on the Motion to Compel, given San Lorenzo's subsequent filing of a response to Student's complaint. Student requested to proceed with the motion claiming that the response was insufficient to enable Student to proceed to hearing. Student's claim in prehearing conference that Student had insufficient information to proceed to hearing due to San Lorenzo's alleged insufficient response to Student's independent educational evaluation issue is unpersuasive. San Lorenzo filed a response to Student's issues alleged in the due process complaint. San Lorenzo promptly emailed Student with more information in response to Student's motion to compel. Student could not provide any legal authority requiring that San Lorenzo's response must contain a particular degree of specificity. Accordingly, Student's motion to compel was denied.

ISSUES AND PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

The issues were discussed at length during the prehearing conference. Issues Two and Six of Student's amended complaint were withdrawn by Student. Some of the issues were withdrawn by Student as duplicative. Student's Issues 12-17 were

withdrawn as they concerned the appropriateness of Student's proposed remedies. The issues were reworded and reorganized by the ALJ. The ALJ has authority to reword and re-organize a party's issues, so long as no substantive changes are made. (J.W. v. Fresno Unified School Dist. (9th Cir. 2010) 626 F.3d 431, 442-443.) A party believing that an issue has been misstated or improperly omitted shall promptly file a notice in writing stating its concern and referring to supporting portions of the complaint. No motion to amend the statement of issues will be considered unless it is made in writing before the hearing.

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

Free appropriate public education is referred to as FAPE. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is referred to as IDEA. Individualized education program is referred to as IEP.

1. Did San Lorenzo deny Student a FAPE from August 2019, to October 7, 2021, by failing to assess Student for special education eligibility pursuant to its child find obligation?
2. Did San Lorenzo deny Student a FAPE during the 2021-2022 school year from February 7, 2022, to July 28, 2022, by:
    a. failing to offer appropriate special education services, specifically inadequate occupational therapy and specialized academic instruction, or any mental health counseling; and
    b. failing to fund and complete the independent educational evaluation agreed to on March 23, 2022, without unnecessary delay?

STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

Student seeks relief for claims in Issue One beyond the two-year statute of limitations. Student asserts an exception to the statute of limitations based on San Lorenzo's alleged withholding of information, specifically, the failure to assist parent to request an assessment in writing, and to provide Parent with procedural safeguards. The hearing will begin with the presentation of evidence on the statute of limitations. Once evidence is heard, the ALJ will go off the record to consider the law and evidence and decide the appropriate scope of Issue One. The ALJ will resume the hearing, put the ruling regarding the statute of limitations on the record, and the hearing will immediately proceed. It is anticipated that the morning of the first day of hearing will be sufficient time to present evidence and resolve the question regarding the statute of limitations.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Student's proposed resolutions include the following: San Lorenzo shall reimburse Parent for three years of tuition and fees for Student's attendance at Livermore Valley Academy and any educational services secured for Student, including behavior services, psychological therapy, speech and language and occupational therapy, and any cancellation fees associated with the delayed independent educational evaluation agreed to in March 2022; three years of additional educational services as compensatory educational services; prospective funding of Livermore Valley Academy until Student is reading at grade level, or through Student's fifth grade year, or until Student returns to San Lorenzo, whichever occurs first. San Lorenzo shall fund an independent psychoeducational by Educational Psychologist, Christa Cusimano, or an assessor of Parent's choice, and an independent functional behavior assessment by an assessor of Parent's choice. San Lorenzo shall hold an IEP team meeting and make an

offer of FAPE to Student within 30 days of completion of the independent educational evaluations. San Lorenzo shall fund trainings for its special education administrators, school psychologists, special education teachers, elementary school administrators and general education teachers regarding its child find and evaluation obligations, learning disabilities, especially dyslexia, including but not limited to assessing and monitoring reading skills to ensure early identification and intervention and the establishment and provision of research-based interventions necessary to the provision of a FAPE in the least restrictive environment for Students with learning disabilities. San Lorenzo shall provide a training to its special education administrators, case managers, and business office regarding its obligations when a parent request an independent educational evaluation at public expense. Lastly, Student requests any other relief deemed appropriate by the ALJ.

San Lorenzo filed its response to Student's complaint on October 10, 2022. (*M.C. v. Antelope Valley Union High School Dist.* (9th Cir. 2017) 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. 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).

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. San Lorenzo must use the letter D before the number to identify San Lorenzo's exhibits. For example, S-1 means Student's exhibit 1 and D-1 means San Lorenzo'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 or letters may be consolidated into one exhibit if they are part of a single chain of messages. Exhibits should be in chronological order.

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

San Lorenzo's exhibits must include a copy of the school calendar for each school year in question, including the extended school year.

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 on at 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 are ordered to meet and confer no later than 5:00 PM on October 13, 2022, 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.

As part of the meet and confer process, San Lorenzo shall inform Student which proposed witnesses are District employees. San Lorenzo shall also identify the witnesses on Student's list that require a subpoena. San Lorenzo may agree to accept service for a witness under San Lorenzo '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 San Lorenzo, 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.

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 is granted.

VIDEO RECORDING

No party, witness or anyone else may videorecord 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.

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

No 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

Neither party requested an interpreter at hearing. Student's counsel did make a request for an accommodation at hearing, directly to OAH, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act. OAH will provide the requested accommodation at hearing.

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 CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC

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

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.

Rita Defilippis

Rita Defilippis
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings