BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE MATTER OF:

PARENTS ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

HUNTINGTON BEACH CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH CASE NUMBER 2026031081

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

JUNE 2, 2026

On June 1, 2026, Administrative Law Judge Ashok Pathi, 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 Madeline Knutson appeared on behalf of Student. Attorney Tracy Petznick Johnson appeared on behalf of Huntington Beach City 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 June 9, 10, and 11, 2026, 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 two 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.

ISSUE AND PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

The ALJ has clarified and reorganized the statement of some issues as allowed by the holdings in *J.W. v. Fresno Unified Sch. Dist*. (9th Cir. 2010) 626 F.3d 431, 442-443, and *Ford v. Long Beach Unified Sch. Dist.* (9th Cir. 2002) 291 F.3d 1086, 1090. (But see *M.C. v. Antelope Valley Union High Sch. Dist*. (9th Cir. 2017) 858 F.3d 1189, 1196, fn. 2 [dictum].) No change in substance has been made. A party believing that an issue has been misstated or improperly omitted shall promptly file a notice in writing, prior to the first day of hearing, stating its concern and referring to supporting portions of the complaint.

A free appropriate public education is called a FAPE. An individualized education program is called an IEP.

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:

ISSUE

1. Did Huntington Beach deny Student a FAPE by failing to facilitate the scheduling of Student's transition IEP with Huntington Beach Union High School District between April 1, 2025, and June 18, 2025?

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

The resolutions requested by Student include compensatory education, and reimbursement of educational expenses funded by Parents.

Huntington Beach filed its response to Student's complaint on April 3, 2026. (*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). 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. Huntington Beach must use the letter D before the number to identify Huntington Beach's exhibits. For example, S-1 means Student's exhibit 1 and D-1 means Huntington 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 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.

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

Electronic copies of exhibits shall be uploaded to Case Center 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 upload 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.

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 June 3, 2026, by 3:00 PM, 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, Huntington Beach shall inform Student which proposed witnesses are District employees. Huntington Beach shall also identify the witnesses on Student's list that require a subpoena. Huntington Beach may agree to accept service for a witness under Huntington 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 Huntington Beach, unless otherwise ordered.

WITNESS SCHEDULE

The parties must provide a joint proposed witness schedule to the ALJ on the first day of hearing. The schedule should include the first and last name of the witness, the witness's title, 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 schedule. 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 file a motion requesting permission to do so before the hearing. Any motion filed after the prehearing conference must be accompanied by a declaration stating why the motion was not filed on time as directed in the scheduling order.

ELECTRONIC RECORDINGS

AUDIO RECORDING

The attorneys for both parties requested permission to make an audio recording of the hearing for their personal note-taking needs. Permission to make an audio recording is granted, subject to 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;

6. participants shall not take screenshots of the videoconference nor share or publish any portion of the videoconference or audio recording; and
7. the parties may not use an artificial intelligence application or program to record the hearing.

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

STUDENT'S MOTION TO CONSOLIDATE

On March 24, 2026, Student filed with OAH, a Request for Due Process Hearing, called a complaint, in OAH case number 2026031081, called Student's First Case, naming Huntington Beach. Student's First Case seeks a determination that Huntington Beach denied Student a FAPE during the 2024-2025 school year, by failing to facilitate the scheduling of a transition IEP team meeting with Huntington Beach Union High School District prior to the end of the 2024-2025 school year.

On May 27, 2026, Student filed a second Request for Due Process Hearing in OAH case number 2026051113, called Student's Second Case, naming Huntington Beach. Student's Second Case seeks a determination that Huntington Beach denied Student a FAPE by failing to convene the mandatory resolution session within 15 days of receiving the due process complaint in Student's First Case.

On May 27, 2026, Student filed a Motion to Consolidate the cases. Huntington Beach opposed Student's motion on May 29, 2026.

On June 1, 2026, Huntington Beach filed a notice of insufficiency as to the complaint in Student's Second Case. OAH determined that Student's complaint in Student's Second Case was insufficiently pled under title 20 United States Code section 1415(c)(2)(D).

Later on June 1, 2026, OAH vacated all dates in that matter, and ordered that the case would be dismissed in 14 days if Student did not file an amended complaint. Accordingly, because there are no sufficient issues raised in Student's Second Case, Student's motion to consolidate is denied as moot.

HUNTINGTON BEACH'S MOTION TO DISMISS

On March 24, 2026, Student filed a complaint with OAH, naming Huntington Beach.

On May 27, 2026, Huntington Beach filed a Motion to Dismiss asserting OAH lacks jurisdiction to adjudicate the issue alleged in the complaint. Huntington Beach supported its motion with a declaration from its director of special education, and an authenticated copy of a March 21, 2024, settlement agreement.

On June 1, 2026, Student opposed Huntington Beach's motion.

RELEVANT AUTHORITY

The purpose of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, called the IDEA, (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et. seq.) is to "ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education," and to protect the rights of those children and their parents. (20 U.S.C. § 1400(d)(1)(A), (B), and (C); see also Ed. Code, § 56000.) A party has the right to present a complaint "with respect to any matter relating to the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child, or the provision of a free appropriate public education [known as FAPE] to such child." (20 U.S.C. § 1415(b)(6); Ed. Code, § 56501, subd. (a) [party has a right to present a complaint regarding matters involving proposal or refusal to initiate or change the identification, assessment, or educational placement of a child; the provision of FAPE to a child; the

refusal of a parent or guardian to consent to an assessment of a child; or a disagreement between a parent or guardian and the public education agency as to the availability of a program appropriate for a child, including the question of financial responsibility].) The jurisdiction of OAH is limited to these matters. (*Wyner v. Manhattan Beach Unified School. Dist.* (9th Cir. 2000) 223 F.3d 1026, 1028-1029.)

California district courts have held that OAH has jurisdiction to interpret and enforce settlement agreements concerning the educational program of a disabled child. (See *Pedraza v. Alameda Unified Sch. Dist.* (N.D. Cal. Mar. 27, 2007) 2007 U.S. Dist. 2007 WL 949603; *Hayden C. v. Western Placer Unified Sch. Dist.* (E.D. Cal. May 12, 2009) 2009 WL 1325945; *Lara v. Lynwood Unified Sch. Dist*. (C.D. Cal. July 29, 2009) 2009 WL 2366454.) "[T]o establish that the OAH had jurisdiction over Plaintiff's claims, Plaintiff must plausibly allege that [a term] under the Settlement Agreement constituted FAPE." (*White v. San Bernardino Cnty. Superintendent of Schs*. (C.D. Cal. Mar. 12, 2020) 2020 WL 2303143, at *4.) Compliance with terms of a settlement that do not involve the provision of FAPE, such as monetary reimbursement to parents, is not within OAH's jurisdiction.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Student alleges a single issue in his due process hearing request. The claim alleges Huntington Beach denied Student a FAPE by failing to hold a transitional IEP team meeting with the Huntington Beach Union High School District during the 2024-2025 school year. Huntington Beach asserts OAH lacks jurisdiction over this claim because it seeks to have OAH enforce a contract.

Student previously filed a complaint against Huntington Beach on November 18, 2025, alleging this same issue. OAH assigned that matter OAH case number

2025110845. Huntington Beach moved to dismiss that complaint on the same grounds that it to moves to dismiss Student's current complaint.

OAH denied that motion in an Order dated December 17, 2025. OAH determined that Huntington Beach's assertion that the settlement agreement barred Student's ability to allege a denial of FAPE is an affirmative defense it could raise at hearing. OAH also determined that adjudicating Student's claims and Huntington Beach's affirmative defenses requires factual findings which cannot be made without an evidentiary hearing. Accordingly, OAH denied the motion to dismiss.

Student withdrew the previous complaint without prejudice after 5:00 PM the day before the hearing was set to begin. Accordingly, OAH has never held a hearing on the merits of Student's claim.

Student subsequently filed the instant complaint on March 24, 2026. Student has been represented by the same law firm for the current matter, the previous matter filed on November 18, 2025, and for the other previous matter which was resolved through the March 21, 2024 settlement agreement.

In the current matter, Huntington Beach previously sought to bifurcate the hearing, such that the applicability of the settlement agreement would be determined before proceeding to Student's claims. OAH denied that request in an Order dated May 22, 2026. OAH again determined that Huntington Beach may raise the settlement agreement as an affirmative defense at hearing.

ADJUDICATING STUDENT'S CLAIMS AND HUNTINGTON BEACH'S AFFIRMATIVE DEFENSES REQUIRES A DUE PROCESS HEARING

Huntington Beach's motion to dismiss fails here for the same reasons it failed previously. OAH does dismiss issues that are facially beyond its jurisdiction, such as those brought under 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. §§ 12101, et seq.), or the Unruh Civil Rights Act (Civ. Code, § 51). For claims that are colorable under the IDEA and corresponding California law, such as Student's issue here, OAH must make factual findings to adjudicate Student's claims and Huntington Beach's affirmative defenses. OAH must conduct a hearing to make these findings, because there is no summary judgment process authorized under special education due process procedures.

Nevertheless, Huntington Beach asserts that a recent case decided by the Federal District Court for the Central District of California in *Lendsey v. Santa Rose Academy Charter School* (C.D. Cal. February 4, 2026) 2:25-cv-03271-HDV-PDx, 2026 WL 331358 (*Lendsey*) allows OAH to dismiss Student's complaint prior to conducting a due process hearing. (See also *Student v. Fountain Valley Sch. Dist.*, (Cal. Off. of Admin. Hrngs. Case No. 2026040090 Apr. 22, 2026) [Order Granting Motion to Dismiss Based Upon Settlement Agreement].)

However, prior OAH orders and decisions are not binding precedent. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 5, § 3085.) Moreover, the court in *Lendsey* affirmed an underlying OAH decision following a multi-day due process hearing. (*Lendsey, supra*, 2026 WL 331358.) Accordingly, Huntington Beach has not established that OAH should dismiss Student's complaint prior to conducting a due process hearing.

Huntington Beach also cites *M.M. v. Los Alamitos Unified Sch. Dist.*, (C.D. Cal. Jun. 4, 2018) SACV 18-00088 AG (DFMx); 2018 WL 5914243 (*M.M.*) to support its argument that OAH can dismiss a matter without conducting a hearing to make factual findings. However, *M.M.* involved a matter facially outside OAH's limited jurisdiction related to validity of a joint legal custody determination made by a Superior Court. It is not disputed that OAH can dismiss claims that are facially outside of its jurisdiction. However, Student's claims here are colorable under the IDEA and corresponding California law and cannot be dismissed on their face.

Huntington Beach's motion is to dismiss is denied without prejudice. Huntington Beach can raise the arguments raised in its motion during the due process hearing. This Order makes no findings regarding the merits of Student's claims, or whether they are barred by the settlement agreement, as to be determined at the due process hearing. Nor does this Order make any findings related to any claim Huntington Beach may have regarding attorney fees. (20 U.S.C. §1415(i)(3)(B)(i)(II).)

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 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 accommodation or a 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 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.

Ashok Pathi

Ashok Pathi
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings