

BEFORE THE
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of:

PARENT ON BEHALF OF STUDENT,

v.

WEST CONTRA COSTA UNIFIED
SCHOOL DISTRICT.

OAH Case No. 2014030838

ORDER FOLLOWING PREHEARING
CONFERENCE

On May 9, 2014, a telephonic prehearing conference (PHC) was held before Administrative Law Judge Margaret M. Broussard, Office of Administrative Hearings. Gail S. Hodes, Attorney at Law, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of Student. Shawn Olson Brown, Attorney at Law, appeared on behalf of the West Contra Costa Unified School District (West Contra Costa). The PHC was recorded.

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

1. Hearing Dates, Times, and Location. The hearing shall take place at **West Contra Costa Unified School District Offices, 2465 Dolan Way, San Pablo, CA 94806.**¹ It shall take place on May 19, 20, 21 and 22, 2014, and continue day-to-day thereafter, Monday through Thursday, at the discretion of the ALJ. On May 19, 2014, the hearing shall begin at 1:30 p.m. and end at 5:00 p.m., and on the remaining days the hearing shall begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 5:00 p.m., unless otherwise ordered.

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.

¹ At a minimum for the hearing, the room shall have separate tables capable of being moved into a courtroom configuration, as follows: (1) one table for Student's representatives; (2) one table for the District's representatives; (3) one table for the ALJ with a nearby electrical outlet; and (4) one witness table. West Contra Costa shall ensure that all parties, witnesses and the ALJ have drinking water and tissue available to them and that the hearing room and other facilities which will be used during the hearing are accessible.

2. Issues and Proposed Resolutions. The issues below were discussed at the PHC and reworded for clarity:

Issues

Issue 1 – Did West Contra Costa deny Student a free appropriate public education (FAPE) by failing to make him eligible for special education and related services since February 2013?

Issue 2 – Did West Contra Costa deny Student a FAPE by failing to provide appropriate academic, attention or behavioral assessments from March 2012 until the present?

Issue 3 – Did West Contra Costa deny Student a FAPE by failing to provide Student with appropriate placement and services, since March 2012, which would have included the following:

- a. pull out 1:1 teaching for core academic areas; or
- b. presentation of information in a concrete manner and providing regular review of the material learned so as to avoid any loss of knowledge; or
- c. appropriate accommodations; or
- d. social skills; or
- e. behavioral support; or
- f. counseling; or
- g. learning via visual assistance?

Issue 4 – Did West Contra Costa commit a procedural violation by failing to provide Parent with a full and complete copy of Student's educational records, subsequent to a request on March 12, 2013, and did this procedural violation significantly impede Parent's opportunity to participate in the decision making process or cause a deprivation of educational benefit to Student?

Proposed Resolutions

1. The ALJ shall find Student eligible for special education under specific learning disability, other health impaired and/or speech and language impaired. West Contra Costa shall develop an IEP.

2. West Contra Costa shall fund independent educational assessments including neuropsychological, behavior, and speech and language assessments.

3. West Contra Costa shall provide compensatory education in all areas of need including, but not limited to: intensive 1:1 academic instruction and/or educational therapy; and reimbursement for education, transportation and related services.

4. West Contra Costa shall fund attorney fees and all other costs incurred through the filing of this complaint pursuant to 20 U.S.C. §1415(h)(3)(B).

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

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

4. Witnesses.

a) Each party is responsible for procuring the attendance at hearing of its own witnesses. Each party shall make witnesses under its control reasonably available to the other party. The parties shall schedule their witnesses to avoid delays in the hearing and to minimize or eliminate the need for calling witnesses twice or out of order. Neither party shall be permitted to call any witnesses not 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.

b) Student has identified seven witnesses to be called at hearing. West Contra Costa has identified 20 witnesses to be called at the hearing. At the beginning of the hearing, each party shall serve on the other party and on OAH a tentative witness list, identifying the witnesses the party intends to call, as opposed to witnesses the party may call depending on the flow of the hearing and the evidence. Each revised witness list shall contain an estimate of the length of each witness’s direct examination testimony. Prior to the commencement of the due process hearing, the ALJ and the parties will discuss the length of

time anticipated for cross-examination of each witness and scheduling issues for individual witnesses, and the ALJ will finalize the witness schedule. The ALJ has discretion to limit the number of witnesses who testify and the time allowed for their testimony.

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. The order in which the parties present their cases in chief shall be subordinate to the need for each witness to appear only once, so the parties shall be required to establish their cases in chief during the first appearance of a witness.

6. Telephonic Testimony. A party seeking to present a witness by telephone shall move in advance for leave to do so; 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. Neither party requested telephonic testimony.

7. Electronic Recording of Hearing.

a. Audio Recording. At present, neither party intends to make an audio recording of the hearing. The following conditions apply to any recording: 1) that OAH's recording is the only official recording; 2) that the recorder will be turned on and off at the same time as the ALJ's recording, to avoid recording conversations while off the record; and 3) the operation of the party's recording mechanism will not be allowed to delay the hearing.

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

8. Motions. At this time, no prehearing motions are pending or contemplated. Any motion filed after this date shall be supported by a declaration under penalty of perjury establishing good cause why the motion was not made prior to or during this prehearing conference.

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

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. Special Needs and Accommodations. At present neither party anticipates the need for any special accommodation for any witness or party.

13. Hearing Closed To the Public. The hearing will be closed to the public.

14. Settlement. The parties are encouraged to continue their attempts to reach an agreement before the due process hearing. The parties shall inform OAH in writing immediately should they reach a settlement or otherwise resolve the dispute before the scheduled hearing. If a settlement is reached five days or fewer than five days before the due process hearing is scheduled to begin, the parties shall, in addition, immediately inform OAH of that fact by telephone at (916) 263-0880. IF A FULL AND FINAL SETTLEMENT IS REACHED AFTER 5:00 P.M. THE BUSINESS DAY PRIOR TO HEARING, THE PARTIES SHALL LEAVE A VOICEMAIL MESSAGE REGARDING THE SETTLEMENT AT (916) 274-6035, AND SHALL ALSO LEAVE CELLULAR PHONE NUMBERS OF EACH PARTY OR COUNSEL FOR EACH PARTY.

Dates for hearing will not be vacated until OAH receives a letter of withdrawal, or those portions of the signed agreement withdrawing the case, with signatures. 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.

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

IT IS SO ORDERED.

DATE: May 9, 2014

/s/

MARGARET BROUSSARD
Administrative Law Judge
Office of Administrative Hearings