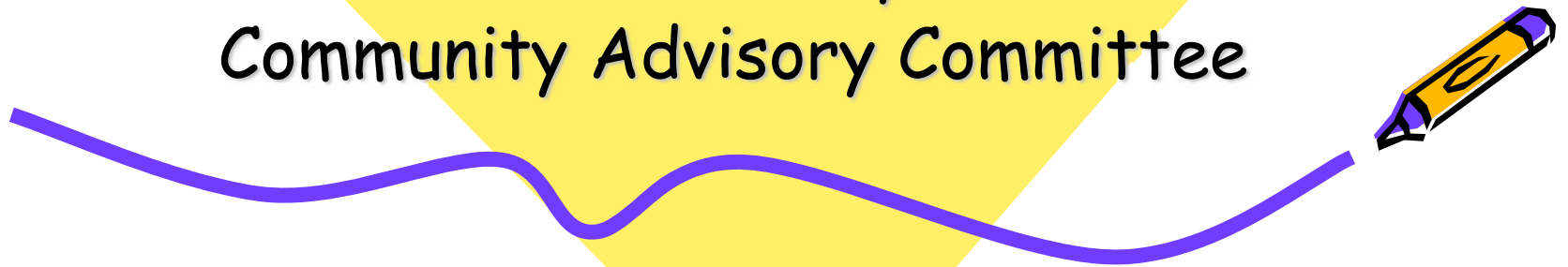


How to Start & Sustain a Special Education Parent Group

San Mateo County SELPA
Community Advisory Committee



The First Day of School



Our First Day of School



Our Families Experience Education Differently

- Frequently don't participate in after school programs
- Often children do not attend neighborhood, or even district, schools
- Our concerns are beyond an A versus a B
- Educational process can be emotionally draining
- We experience education PLUS

Benefits of a Parent Organization within a District

- Parent education about the special education system
- Training for SPED and regular education staff to benefit our children
- Emotional support for families
- Networking
- Social events
- Creation of a more inclusive environment

What's Needed

- Core group of committed parent volunteers to provide leadership
- Ideally, support of special education administration
- An interest in involving families of a variety of backgrounds
- Fundraising (Optional)

Mission

- Our focus is fostering collaboration between the schools, teachers, families and communities to support children with special needs.
 - San Ramon Valley SD –Special Needs Committee

Panel Presentation

- Special Education Committee
 - *Dana Fugate* Chair of San Mateo/Foster City PTA Council, Special Education Committee
- Special Education Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
 - *Debra Adler* Member Services Chair of SEPTAR and 17th District PTA VP

- Other Options

1. Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
2. Special Education Advisory Committee
3. Appreciating Our Differences Committee

Bronte Abraham of the Menlo Park
Appreciating Our Differences Committee

- Teacher Perspective and Involvement

Cynthia Armon teacher & member of Santa
Clara County Autism Project PTA

Dana Fugate

San Mateo – Foster City School District
PTA Council
Special Education Committee

San Mateo-Foster City

PTA Special Ed Council

PTA Special Ed Council



aka SEPTA-lite

- Committee Chairperson sits as officer on general PTA Board and as a PTA President on the PTA Council
- Funded by the general PTA budget
- Minimal leadership requirement is one Chairperson
- Bi-monthly meetings

WHY? Special Ed Council

- Fully supported by Special Ed Director
 - Ours orders childcare & translation services plus helps reserve meeting venues
- Strong support by general PTA
 - Each school in district has a PTA President
- No need for fundraising, parliamentary procedure, or officers
- In short, very easy to start up and maintain, but must have support of existing PTA personnel and the existing PTA structure

2006-2007 Meeting Topics

- Kick off and brainstorm for year's focus
- Special Ed overview & Funding overview
 - Special Ed Director & Chief Business Officer
- Special Ed Staffing
 - Assistant Superintendant of HR
- Transition Panel
 - PHP parent, Middle School SDC teacher & Psych
- Inclusion Panel and Special Ed Strategic Plan
 - SFUSD Content Specialist, Staff Development Consultant, School Principal, PHP parent

New for 2007-2008

- Merging PTA meetings with parent ed nights
 - Working with SDC parent ed groups
- Designated special ed parent reps for each general school PTA
- Website owner to work with PTA webmaster
- Committee for Board of Education presence
- Leadership Committee to assist Chair!

Debra Adler

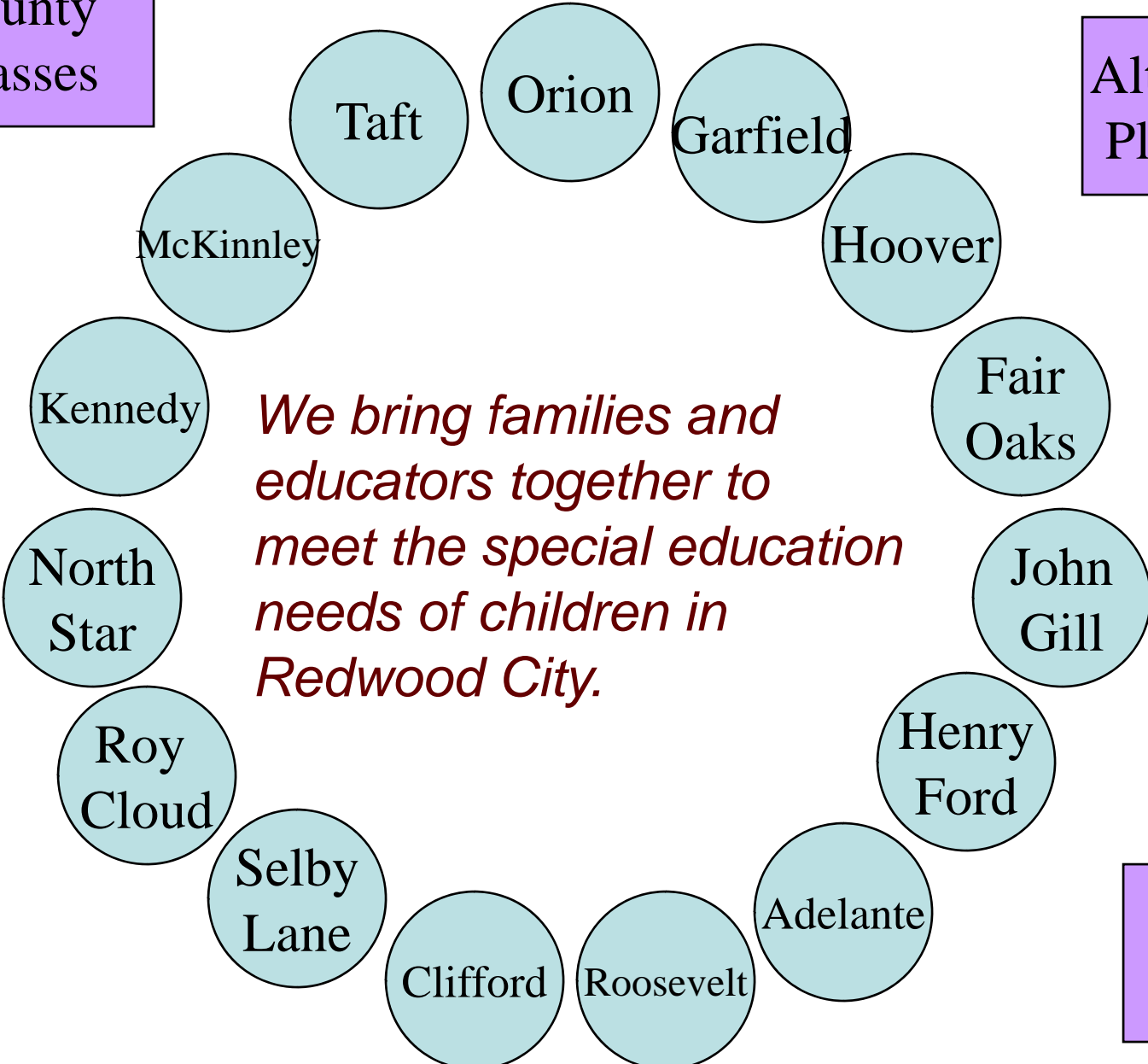
Special Education PTA of Redwood City
and
17th District PTA



SEPTAR

County
Classes

Alternative
Placement



We bring families and educators together to meet the special education needs of children in Redwood City.

Home
Schooling

Why is SEPTAR a PTA?

- Recognized in the community
- Advocates for all children
- Provides resources and training
- Non-profit organization
 - Enables us to fundraise and help reach our goals for programs, education, support and community building



Once we made our decision, we
took the next step and
formalized our community . . .

A group of volunteers
committed to positively impact
the lives of all children and
families

Bronte Abraham

Menlo Park City School District

Appreciating Our Differences Committee

What If a SEPTA or Committee is Not an Option for You?

Begin a dialogue with the general education community

- Contact the PTO/PTA President
- Meet with your principal
- Define methods to incorporate ***inclusion and tolerance goals*** into PTO and general education programming

The Oak Knoll School

Appreciating Our Differences Program

- PTO committee open to all members of the community
- One-week curriculum involving parent-facilitated classroom workshops to raise awareness on individual differences, support inclusiveness and decrease teasing/bullying
- Supplemental activities
 - Hello Lunch, KNOL TV broadcasts, poster/essay contest, resource room participation
- Additional activities through the year
 - Buddy lunch with Kids with Dreams, Why am I Special poster contest during National Inclusive Schools Week, alternative recess program

Advantages

1. Educates general education teachers and families about special needs
2. Supports inclusion and awareness about learning differences
3. Identifies need for additional parent education programming
4. Provides training opportunities for general education teachers

Disadvantages

1. Limited to single campus
2. Cannot address special education or disease specific topics
3. Does not involve district level policy makers

Other Options

- District Level Special Education Advisory Committee
 - May be appointed by SE Director or Superintendent
 - Agenda is driven primarily by district
- Disease Specific PTAs
 - County wide initiatives for a specific disease state (e.g. the Autism PTA in Santa Clara)
- Network not Affiliated with School District
 - Provides support and education

Cynthia Armon

Santa Clara County
Autism Project PTA

Future Opportunities

- County-wide Parent Organization
 - Ex. Santa Clara Co. Autism Project
- Resource faire
- Support groups
 - For specific diagnosis
 - For specific languages
- Collaboration between groups allowing:
 - Presentations from popular speakers
 - Staff training