

Child Development Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Hosts

Lizette Lopez
Mark Marano
Ruby Duron

Committee Members

Trini Alvarez
(LAHC, Counselor)

Priscilla Lopez
(LAHC, Dean)

Debra Watts
(LBBC Child Development Center, Teacher)

Michelle Ramirez
(Little Owl School, Program Director)

Megumi Kuwabara
(CSUDH Child Development, Department Chair)

Aura Rivera
(LAHC, Adult Ed/Outreach Coordinator)

Karen Grgas
(CECMP, LAHC Mentor)

Helena Taylor
(LAHC, Child Development Student)

Denise Rendon
(Carson AEE, Teacher)

Patricia Reynoso
(Community Development Center, Early Childhood Educator)

Melanie Reynoso
(Community Development Center, Early Childhood Educator)

Angela Greathouse
(CECMP, LAHC Mentor)

Kimberly Radmacher
(CSUDH, Child Development Professor)

Vanessa Cruz
(LAHC, TCAP Education Counselor)

Toni Newman
(LAHC, Adjunct Child Development Instructor)

Sylvia Velazquez-Lawrence

(Pacific Sage Preschool, Director & Master Teacher)

Stephanie Reynoso
(Community Development Center, Early Childhood Educator)



Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, March 19th (5:30pm - 7:30pm)

5:30pm – 5:40pm *Introductions*

5:40pm – 6:20pm *Program & State Updates*

6:20pm – 7:50pm *Discussion & Questions*

1. **As the landscape of early childhood employment evolves, what roles do you anticipate needing to fill, and what essential qualities will you seek in those stepping into these positions?**
2. **As our students progress through our in-language (Spanish) program, how do you see their bilingual skills aligning with your hiring needs? What qualifications or competencies would make them strong candidates for your team?**
3. **As we strengthen our practicum placement process, what key quality indicators should we prioritize when selecting community partners and worksites?**
 - a. **Given our focus on high-quality, play-based programs, what criteria or vetting steps—such as applications, site visits, references, or assessments like ECERS—would you recommend to ensure these environments effectively support educator growth and reflect a view of children as competent, capable, and full of potential?**

Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Program & State Updates

Community of Practice

- **Topic:** Superheroes and Weapons in ECE settings
- **Schedule:** Last Wednesday of each month (hybrid: in person & Zoom)
- This space supports professional reflection and shared inquiry. The theme reflects pressing classroom issues (e.g., weapon play) and aims to foster inclusive conversations on challenging behaviors and guidance strategies.

Mentor Program

- Recruitment for new mentor pairings will begin in the Summer and Fall of 2025. This initiative supports newer students by pairing them with experienced peers or professionals to increase retention and foster community.

Curriculum Course Delivery Format

- LAHC does **not** offer Child Development curriculum courses online. These hands-on, experiential courses are essential for understanding how to design, implement, and reflect on developmentally appropriate curriculum. Prioritizing in-person delivery supports high-quality preparation.

In-Language Spanish Program

- Five general education courses have been successfully offered in Spanish, alongside Child Development core courses. This initiative serves multilingual students and allows them to pursue a GED, teaching permit, or an A.A. degree entirely in Spanish.
- We celebrated the first in-language cohort of students completing 12+ units in Fall 2024.

LAUSD High School Pathway: Carson High School

- A thriving pathway has been established at Carson High School. The current cohort is in its final semester, and the third cohort will launch in Fall 2025.
- Students can take both CD and GE courses during the school day and graduate with a high school diploma and an A.A. degree.

PK-3 Credential Pipeline

- Professor Lopez is collaborating with the State Chancellor's Office through the Uplift Grant to expand awareness and access to the PK-3 credential.

- LAHC is building a transfer and workforce pipeline with CSUDH, ensuring alignment across Child Development and Liberal Studies programs.
- This initiative particularly supports:
 - High school students starting the pathway early
 - Community college students who are navigating transfer goals
 - Degree holders now seeking CD units for PK-3 compliance

New Certificates:

Dual Language Certificate (18 units)

- Core: CD 001, 002, 007, 011 (12 units)
- Additional: CD 014 and either CD 008 or CD 030 (6 units)
- This certificate prepares educators to implement bilingual practices in early learning classrooms. It provides theoretical foundations and classroom strategies tailored to multilingual learners.

Advisory Feedback:

- **Sylvia Velasquez (Pacific Sage Preschool):** CD 030 is a strong addition because some programs require infant/toddler units for licensing.
- **Michelle Ramirez (Little Owl School):** CD 030 provides essential foundations in early development. Even educators who do not work with infants benefit from understanding this stage. "It all connects. If you're working with young children, you need to know where they started."
- **CD Faculty:** CD 014 supports educators in understanding language development and its role in culture and identity.
- **Vanessa Cruz (LAHC Counselor):** This certificate makes our students more competitive and specialized in the workforce.

Special Needs & Neurodiversity Certificate (21 units)

- Core: CD 001, 002, 007, 011 (12 units)
- Additional: CD 034, CD 044, CD 045 (9 units)
- This certificate supports inclusive education by preparing educators to observe, assess, and adapt practices for neurodivergent children and children with special needs.

Advisory Feedback:

- **Michelle Ramirez (Little Owl School):** This certificate is vital. Families deserve teachers who understand neurodiversity, whether or not they specialize in that field.
- **Aura Rivera (LAHC Outreach):** High school seniors are actively seeking courses related to special needs, a relevant and growing interest area.
- **Vanessa Cruz (TCAP Counselor):** This is marketable, especially for students who want to work with children but not necessarily in a traditional classroom setting.

- **Angela Greathouse (Mentor):** Opens pathways to careers in nonprofits, advocacy, and therapeutic environments.
 - **Toni Newman (Adjunct):** Recommends integrating career exploration opportunities like job shadowing and guest speakers into coursework.
-

Rebranding the Certificate of Achievement:

The department is exploring rebranding and restructuring the current Certificate of Achievement. The goal is to improve persistence rates, simplify pathways, and reduce the total number of units required.

Advisory Feedback:

- **Michelle Ramirez:** Suggested hosting student focus groups or roundtables to identify barriers to completion.
 - **Aura Rivera:** Students often walk away when the certificate requires too many units. Offering smaller milestones may keep them engaged.
 - **Helena Taylor (LAHC Student):** Suggested breaking the certificate into more focused options.
 - **Debra Watts (LBCC):** Urged the department to consider the disconnect between certificate requirements and livable wages.
 - **Toni Newman:** Raised concern about student attrition due to inaccessible or under-offered courses.
 - **CD Faculty:** Acknowledged that certain required courses are rarely offered, forcing students to take them elsewhere.
 - **Debra Watts:** Recommended prioritizing observation courses in any redesigned certificate. English should not be a required course in the certificate sequence.
-

Associate of Science – Child Development:

Designed for students entering the workforce and those transferring into Child Development or ECE. Plans are underway to reduce unit counts, improve access, and align with permit requirements.

Advisory Feedback:

- **Denise Rendon (Carson H.S.):** Questioned the necessity of having both CD3 and CD4 when CD7 and CD8 could serve similar functions.
 - Expressed concern about replacing CD units with too many GE requirements. Students need more exposure to classroom practice.
- **Michelle Ramirez:** Suggested placing extra CD courses under electives, giving students scheduling flexibility and choice.

Discussion Questions:

1. As the landscape of early childhood employment evolves, what roles do you anticipate needing to fill, and what essential qualities will you seek in those stepping into these positions?

- **Sylvia Velasquez:** Educators must navigate mixed-age classrooms, supporting younger children while enriching older ones.
- **Toni Newman:** DAP must be at the center of training. Teachers must know how to adapt to each child's developmental needs.
- **Debra Watts:** The physical environment must be seen as a learning tool. Classrooms should reflect accessibility and inclusion.

2. As our students progress through our in-language (Spanish) program, how do you see their bilingual skills aligning with your hiring needs? What qualifications or competencies would make them strong candidates for your team?

- **Debra Watts:** Bilingualism in any language is a major asset.
- **Angela Greathouse:** Reinforcing English language skills alongside CD knowledge prepares students better for workforce demands.
- **Sylvia Velasquez:** Public agencies may require English literacy; private programs are often more flexible and value Spanish fluency.

3. As we strengthen our practicum placement process, what key quality indicators should we prioritize when selecting community partners and worksites?

- **Given our focus on high-quality, play-based programs, what criteria or vetting steps—such as applications, site visits, references, or assessments like ECERS—would you recommend to ensure these environments effectively support educator growth and reflect a view of children as competent, capable, and full of potential?**
- **Toni Newman:** Look for environments that reflect respect, play, and accessibility. Ask: Are adults engaging **with** children, not just speaking **at** them?
- **Kimberly Radmacher (CSUDH):** Asked whether LAHC's lab school takes practicum students.
- **Debra Watts:** Raised concern: how can it be a lab school if students can't practice there?
- **Michelle Ramirez:** Practicum placements must be equitable. Lab schools should be available to students without transportation or job sites.

Summary of Findings from the Child Development Sector Survey

The survey responses from stakeholders in the child development sector reveal several clear trends and priorities:

1. Rising Demand for Educators:

- **89%** of respondents expect an increase in demand for early childhood educators over the next 3–5 years, with **12** anticipating a *significant* increase and **5** a *slight* increase.
- Only **2** foresee no change, and **3** anticipate a decrease.

2. Alignment with Industry Needs:

- The majority (**15**) believe the current program is *well-aligned* with industry needs.
- However, **6** see it as only *somewhat aligned*, and **1** feels updates are needed, suggesting room for targeted improvements.

3. Support for a Special Needs Certificate Program:

- There is strong endorsement, with **17** *strongly supporting* and **3** *supporting* this initiative.
- Only **2** respondents were neutral, indicating broad consensus.

4. Support for a Dual Language Certificate Program:

- Similarly, **15** *strongly support* and **6** *support* a dual language certificate.
- Just **1** respondent was neutral, showing robust interest in bilingual training.

5. Growing Need for Specialized Training:

- **Special Needs Training:** **16** *strongly agree* and **5** *agree* there is a growing need, highlighting it as a critical area.
- **Dual Language Training:** **13** *strongly agree* and **6** *agree*, underscoring the importance of linguistic inclusivity in early childhood education.

Conclusion

There is strong, consistent support across respondents for enhancing educator preparation programs with specialized training in both special needs and dual language development. These results underscore the urgency for responsive curriculum updates to meet anticipated workforce needs and community priorities, and the creation of a *Certificate of Achievement in Special Needs & Neurodiversity*.