

# LVEA TODAY



## The Extent Some Parents Will Go

In our February LVEA Today newsletter, we wrote about fabricated/exaggerated parent complaints that have been made against some of our colleagues. The article was written as a result of the stress and frustration that many of our members have felt as a result of unwarranted accusations. These tend to be hurtful, embarrassing and directed at targeted employees without any concern of adverse consequences. Specifically we'd like to reference a long time, successful and respected Special Education teacher in our district, who's exhausting situation finally came to a conclusion this last month. She has graciously agreed to have her story heard in hopes that others will not have to endure a similar situation.

She worked at an elementary and high school for many years before taking on a districtwide position. While on medical leave, an incident happened with one of her students at a district funded, out-of-state school and the parents complained to the Ventura County SELPA about the incident. Since she was on leave, the SELPA and LVUSD investigated the issue thoroughly and determined that the residential program handled the situation properly. Consistent with our February article, these were overbearing and unreasonable parents. They filed a complaint against our district but missed a deadline with the California Dept of Education. They weren't finished...

The parents went after her teaching credential by filing a complaint with the California Teaching Commission (CTC) even though she was on medical leave at the time of the incident. Since the day before Thanksgiving 2018 when the CTC complaint was sent to her home via registered mail, she had to live and work in a state of constant fear and anxiety. The parents exaggerated the incident and fabricated many parts in an attempt to ruin her teaching career by getting her credential revoked. The district sent letters of support to the CTC on behalf of her but the state couldn't brush aside the claims since the parents' version of the incident was so outrageous. Immediately upon receiving the complaint on that fateful day in November, LVEA and CTA retained a credentialing lawyer who worked with her to plan her defense. She had to travel to Sacramento in January to meet with her attorney and then again this past month, she had to spend three days in Sacramento, waiting to have her case heard by the CTC. She finally was escorted into a conference room where approx. 20 people grilled her about the situation. They even asked why she didn't respond to the parents' email while out on medical leave! Fortunately, after months of anguish, countless hours away from her family and many thousands of dollars in legal fees (covered by her CTA dues), the CTC sided with her and rejected the parents' charges.

What can we all learn from this? First, CTA has your back and will cover legal fees for all members. She mentioned "I am extremely grateful to

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CTA and their amazing attorney who held my hand through all this." Second, it serves as an example of why we should all be diligent and make sure we're proactive with everything related to IEPs or 504s. And we're not just talking about our Special Education colleagues. Any General Ed teacher can be charged with a CTC complaint regarding the handling of an IEP or 504. It doesn't matter how crazy a parent is...if they file exaggerated and/or fabricated charges against you with the CTC, your credential and job could be on the line. Be proactive and follow all IEP and 504 guidelines. Your professional future depends on it!

## Grants and Deans

You've probably heard about the District Office Grant Writing progress – here's what they've obtained so far:

- \$1.5 Million SpEd grant (ten scholarships/year) for current employees to obtain a SpEd teaching credential. This will help fill SpEd teaching shortages but will likely recruit from our small pool of Instructional Assistants...so please continue encouraging community members to apply for an IA position!
- \$1.075 Million Prop 56 grant (three deans for education and intervention, two specifically to prevent vaping).
- \$830,000 Low Performing Block grant (one Literacy Coach for elementary ELA and one counselor for the 360 center)

Two more recently submitted grants:

- \$2 Million Center for Tech Ed (Strong Workforce Program to revitalize auto & woodshop spaces at Agoura HS)
- \$300,000 Anthem grant for K-8 Physical Wellness

The District has moved quickly to spend these grant funds. This is one-time money that has to be spent over a short period of time. Therefore, the District is focused on areas of need that can be eliminated once the grand funding sources dry up. This has led to the hiring of deans that have been hired from their new PASC program. In addition, they are planning to hire a dean at each high school to work with counselors (displacing a counseling position at each site) and discussing a new Data Director (super dean?) at the district office to help write more grants and create data reports for someone to read. We jokingly state that there'll be so many deans that they'll be bumping into each other!

LVEA has pushed to focus spending this money closer to the classroom and more balanced between secondary and elementary students. We love the literacy coach concept, and the 360 counseling center has already fielded 60 student referrals (25% are currently elementary for reasons of anxiety, depression and behavior) – this has helped our counselors' workload and provided focused support to students. But this is a lot of money and we encourage the district to work with LVEA to find more ways to get this money into the classroom. Even if it's for a limited time with the one-time grants, **let's lower class sizes, invest in curricular programs to address some of our behavioral/disciplinary needs, invest in technology training, etc.!**

We thank Ryan Gleason for his awesome efforts to get more money/grants for the district. LVEA shares the goal with LVUSD to use these grants to help students and sustain long-term financial viability by maximizing the use of these short-term funds. We understand the district must work within the constraints of the grants, but **we simply think it's best to direct these funds closer to the classroom where we can really enhance student learning and reduce the workload and stress for our employees** – this will significantly enhance their effectiveness with students!

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