

THE ADVOCATE

Stop understaffing Special Ed!

We're not going to take it anymore!

Fed up with understaffing in Special Education, more than 30 educators marched on the office of the Executive Director of Special Education shortly before Thanksgiving. The group delivered a 50-foot long petition signed by Association Representatives (ARs) and special educators from all across the District demanding SDUSD put students first and stop understaffing Special Education.

The effort by union members to pressure District leaders to stop understaffing Special Education started at the Nov. 7 SDEA Representative Council meeting, where ARs and Council Representatives (CRs) considered two questions:

1. Is your school understaffed in Special Education, either because caseloads are over or IEP service hour requirements aren't being met?

2. How bad is it?

Each rep then placed the name of their school on a 25-foot "temperature" scale along the wall to indicate how "hot" understaffing is at their school. It created a clear and somber image of what's wrong: a super-majority of our schools are understaffed in Special Education.

After seeing how deep the problem of understaffing is,

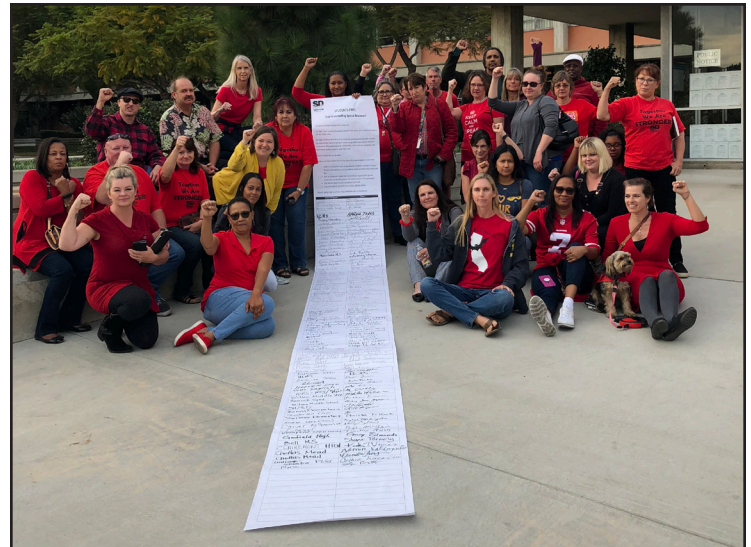
reps signed onto a giant petition calling on Special Education Executive Director Sarah Ott to give our schools enough Special Education staff to maintain caseloads and meet IEP requirements.

Besides the fact that the petition was too big to just stick in the mail, educators knew we could make a bigger impact if we delivered it in person... so that's just what we did! On Nov. 15 educators dropped by Ott's office to deliver the petition. The crowd overflowed the office and spilled outside.

Union educators are frontline defenders of every student's right to a quality education. We aren't going to let SDUSD shortchange students with the highest needs by understaffing Special Education. We are taking action, and we aren't going to give up until SDUSD does right by our students. Here's what you can do now to be part of the fight:

1. If caseloads are over contract numbers at your school, work together with your AR to file a grievance.

2. At the Dec. 12 Rep. Council the next collective action to turn up the heat on SDUSD will be announced. Ask your AR how you can support them in making sure your school is represented at the Council meeting.



Top: Enough is enough! A delegation of SDEA members delivered a petition demanding an end to SPED understaffing. Above: SPED understaffing at our schools is a HOT issue!



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Letters in Solidarity

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If you see something, say something

Americans are told that if something doesn't seem quite right, we should say something. Unfortunately, as educators, we don't always apply that same level of awareness to our working conditions. When we encounter situations that are detrimental to the well-being of our students, ourselves, or our colleagues, we attempt to solve those problems on our own, or we just make do. Often this means that problems persist and educators get burned out. In worst case scenarios, educators and students are put at risk. We can no longer stand by and just let things happen to us, our fellow educators, or our students. We have to say something.

When we stand up and say something, positive change happens. Since school started, members have spoken up to say that special educators were not receiving the support they needed to serve our neediest students. General education teachers are feeling the same frustrations around support. The understaffing of Special Education is having a real impact on a growing number of educators and students. So SDEA reps stood up and said, "Enough! Something has got to change!"

We organized, created a plan, developed demands, and delivered those demands to the Special Education office. Already, sites are seeing increased allocations. But we are not going to ease up on the pressure until every student is receiving the services they are entitled to in their IEP.

Understaffing of Special Education is just one issue affecting educators. It is important that we all understand the rights we have fought for in our contract and enforce those rights. If something doesn't seem right, check the contract and speak with your AR. Say something.

As the year comes to an end and we celebrate with our friends and family, rest up and recharge your batteries. Thank you for all of your hard work in and out of the classroom. Remember, we are in this together. Your union brothers and sisters have your back. Together we are stronger and if we continue to fight together, who knows what we can accomplish!

Kisha Borden
SDEA President

Scott Mullin
SDEA Vice President

The G word: What exactly is a grievance?

One key power union members have through a union contract is the ability to enforce their rights in the workplace through the grievance and arbitration procedure. In simplest terms, a grievance is a way to solve a problem when a contract violation occurs. The grievance process is a mutually agreed-upon legally-binding conflict resolution procedure. Ours is in Article 15 in the SDEA-SDUSD contract.

Any disputes arising out of an interpretation or application of any contractual provision (e.g. transfers, evaluations, work hours, special education caseloads) can be grieved and resolved through the grievance procedure. A grievance is an allegation that a specific contractual provision has been violated by the employer, like a member being exceeded out of seniority order.

Grievances have timelines associated with them, which are extremely important to follow, at the risk of having a legitimate grievance thrown out because it was not filed in a timely manner. This

means that a SDEA bargaining unit member has 15 work days (not calendar days) from the date of the violation to file a grievance. Within those 15 days, the member should speak with the site's SDEA Association Representative (AR), who will work with SDEA staff to investigate and discuss the merits of and resolution for the grievance, and to check and see if this is an issue which may affect others at the site. In some cases, a group grievance may be part of an organizing plan to hold the administrator accountable and to enforce union members' rights at the site or in the program.

So what exactly is a grievance? The first step is simple: It's just an informal discussion! In a Step One grievance meeting, the affected members, AR and appropriate administrator meet to have an informal discussion of the problem. The vast majority of grievances are resolved at that stage. If the issue is not resolved, the AR can work with SDEA staff to advance the grievance to Step Two and beyond.



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PREVENT STRESS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

With all the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, it's easy to feel more frazzled than festive. These tips can help keep the Grinch from stealing your holiday spirit:

- * **Don't be afraid to say no.** If saying yes to one more invite or project is likely to make you feel overwhelmed, politely turn it down.
- * **Take time to recharge.** Schedule some "me time" with a massage, afternoon nap, reading break or yoga class.
- * **Maintain healthy habits.** Get plenty of sleep, stay active and opt for healthy foods at gatherings.

Visit VEBAonline.com for more tips on keeping your holidays healthy.

UHC Alliance members: Through the Scripps/VEBA partnership, several resources, designed to keep your health care stress-free, are available to you.

- * **Online scheduling.** Make, reschedule or cancel doctor appointments online.
- * **Walk-in clinics.** Same-day care for minor illnesses and injuries.
- * **eCheck-in.** Reduce wait time by checking in before an office visit.

Learn more about available resources at scripps.org.



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