

AUSD wins \$1 million Local Solutions Grant to fund support, recruitment of special education teachers

The district to hold informational meetings in coming weeks

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing announced in January that Alhambra Unified won a \$1 million Local Solutions Grant to address the shortage of special education grant funding.

"There is a lot of work ahead of us, but we are very excited with this opportunity to support special education," said AUSD Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources Anna Kuo.

Approximately 10% of the TK-12 AUSD student population of 16,684 students is receiving special education. The district has 13 K-8 elementary schools, three comprehensive high schools, and one alternative high school. AUSD also has one special education preschool and two adult transition programs.

The \$1 million Local Solutions Grant will enable AUSD to recruit and hire 50 participants. AUSD offices of Special Education and Human Resources will work together to offer informational meetings over the next few weeks. The joint efforts will involve district Special Education Directors Pat Mahony (high school to adult

transition) and Michele Yamarone (birth to eighth) and Human Resources Director Stacie Colman-Hsu along with the efforts of Ms. Kuo.

In addition to recruitment, the funding award will:

- Provide tuition assistance to general education teachers to obtain an additional special ed credential, which will benefit them with the direction that special ed is heading, i.e., more special ed students are being mainstreamed into the general ed classrooms.
- Provide tuition assistance to the special ed interns.
- Provide stipends to teachers in the program when they complete their special ed credential.
- Provide stipends to special ed teachers who are willing to receive training to become Master Teacher.
- Provide for hiring of additional special ed instructional specialists.
- Provide collaboration and training time.

Kapono the Robot visits Brightwood School

Newest colleague at CSU LA's Charter College of Education is winning friends

BY KYLE YIU, BRIGHTWOOD SCHOOL SECOND-GRADE STUDENT

On Dec. 10, our teacher, Kimberly Ng, gave us a surprise, but we had no idea what the surprise was. Everybody was super excited to see what the surprise was.

When the surprise came, it was a robot with a human shape that was white and blue. The blue was on his shoulders and on his hand. There was a small patch of blue on his knees. There was a patch of gray on his leg connecting to the robot's body. And the rest of the robot's arms, legs, and body were white. His name was Kapono.

He was frozen, but it needed a minute to power up. Then his eyes lit up to a rainbow color. It turned super light blue. Kapono's head seemed to twist. He was hearing our sounds that we were making. Dr. Cheryl Ney, from Cal State University L.A., said Kapono can do tai-chi. Kapono did tai-chi but in the middle of that, he fell down. Almost everyone said, "Are you okay?" All of us thought that Kapono was not going to get up. But he did! He slowly got up by the push of his arms. Everybody clapped.

He answered some questions like "How are you?" and "Can you be friends with me?" And he even told 'Twas the Night Before Christmas! Kapono was an amazing robot that went to my classroom and he was awesome!



Kapono, the humanoid robot from CSU LA, visited Michelle Luong's first-grade class. Her student Madelyn Poon waits patiently for Kapono to answer her question, "How old are you?" Also pictured is Nishkani Patel, the CSU LA CCOE graduate student who is affectionately referred to as Kapono's nanny, and, left, AUSD Board of Education President Bob Gin. (Photo: Lizeal Gutierrez.)

All the first- and second-graders really liked Kapono. Here's what other kids said about him: Derek Jimenez: "I liked when Kapono told us the story 'Twas the Night Before Christmas.'" Mia Mateos: "I was excited to ask Kapono questions." Nicolas Kiamzon: "I liked when Kapono was doing Tai Chi moves."



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Principal Chris Takeshita nominated Ms. Allaf for her dedication to academic rigor and devotion to students. "Patricia is a great person, so engaged with the school, is on our Cadre Team, our ASB, and she was also nominated for the Above and Beyond Badge through the district," he said. "She greets her students every day with a high five or a fist bump." He added that research shows greeting students at the door increases engagement and promotes a sense of belonging.

"I think students need to hear three things from teachers: I believe in you. You have a purpose. How are you, really?" Ms. Allaf said.

The L.A. Clippers have long honored teachers and provided community literacy outreach to support reading and create readers through Read to Achieve programs. To learn more: <https://www.nba.com/clippers/community/education.html>.

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