

Parents Organizing for Language Access in Special Education



Families whose home language is not English struggle to navigate the complex Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, limiting their ability to advocate for their children's education. But when parents have access to clear, timely information in their home language, they can work with their child's teacher to get the resources they need.

In San Francisco, Innovate parents sparked a movement for language access in special education, driving local wins that inspired the passage of statewide legislation.



The translation of documents and student assessments could take up to 3 months to a year, making it difficult for me as a parent to advocate for my child."

– Rosario Gonzalez,
San Francisco Parent Leader at
Monroe Elementary School



LOCAL

Parents Driving Policy Change in San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD)

The How

In 2019, a group of Latina parent leaders, mothers and grandmothers in the Mission District of San Francisco, organized with over 350 other parents to address the lack of timely, quality written translation and verbal interpretation during SFUSD's IEP process.

The Win

In 2022, these efforts led the District to adopt Policy 5023, which requires **high-quality translation** of IEP materials to be provided to families before meetings and interpretation be available at IEP and other school meetings.

The Impact

Policy 5023 helps ensure non-English speaking families can fully participate in their child's education.



See Parents in Action



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STATE

Historic Senate Bill 445 (Portantino) Improves Access to IEP Translation

The How

Innovate's Statewide Parent Leader Board partnered with Senator Anthony Portantino to co-sponsor Senate Bill 445, mobilizing parents across California to meet with legislators, testify, and form a coalition alongside Disability Rights California and Educate.Advocate, among others.

The Win

In 2024, SB 445 became law, requiring California's Department of Education to **translate the newly released IEP template into the 10 most commonly spoken languages** and to make that template accessible to all districts.

The Impact

There are 837,000 students with IEPs across California. This bill is a critical step forward in improving access to timely, quality translation for families.



Watch Parents at the Capital



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NATIONAL

Pioneering Technology for Students with Special Needs

The How

Innovate partnered with Northeastern University and our parent leaders to create the AiEP Tool, a free, multilingual, generative AI tool that translates and simplifies IEPs.

The Win

In 2025, AiEP will be piloted with 100 families across San Francisco offering three main features:

- IEP document translation
- Streamlined document display
- AI-driven chatbot

The Impact

This solution has the potential to transform access to special education (SPED) diagnostics and resources for 7.5 million families nationwide, enabling families and schools to partner together to ensure better outcomes for SPED students.



Learn more about AiEP



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Support Innovate's Parent Leaders to ensure Black and Brown parents can continue to mobilize for change.

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