Our first newsletter
Welcome to the first Albany Disability Squad (ADS) newsletter! We plan to feature upcoming Squad events, support each other in raising students with disabilities and navigating the complex Special Education system, share information on our advocacy work, and build community with all of you.

Upcoming events
September 8, 2020
AUSD Board of Education meeting
6:00 p.m.
Special Education is on the agenda at 6:50 p.m.
Join Zoom meeting

September 9, 2020
ADS Family Support Group meeting
6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Please join us in discussing how distance learning has been going for your kids, how you are managing multiple roles as parent and teacher, and how we can help each other and our kids.
Join Zoom meeting

September 29, 2020
ADS School Board Candidates Forum
6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
Please join us as we interview the three candidates for the AUSD Board of Education: Brian Beall, Melissa Boyd, and Veronica Davidson. We will post a Zoom link closer to the date of the event.

What to do if you have...
A student struggling with distance learning
- Contact your AUSD case manager. If you are not sure who that is, contact your student’s principal, and they will refer you to the right person.
- Call an IEP meeting to update your student’s IEP with a Continuity Learning Plan. AUSD must schedule a meeting within 30 days upon request.

A question for other parents or want to share your experiences
- Come to our next Family Support Group meeting on September 9!
- Take our survey by Sept 11 to help ADS learn what families are facing. We will take the results to a meeting with the AUSD administration.
- Send a message to our email discussion list. Send your subscription request to albanydisabilitysquad@gmail.com.
- Post on our Facebook page.

September is Suicide Prevention Month
A large Canadian study found that people with learning disabilities — particularly women — had a much higher rate of suicidal behavior than the general population. Students suffering from mental health issues, including suicidal ideation, are entitled to services under the IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. To request an evaluation, contact the Executive Director of Student Services in writing to assess whether the student qualifies for an IEP or a 504 plan. For resources on children's mental health and emotional or behavioral disorders, parents can visit Pacer's Inspiring Opportunities Project.
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF) can help you navigate the IEP/504 process. If your child is in acute crisis, contact National Suicide Prevention Lifeline which is available 24 hours in English & Spanish. 1-800-273-8255.
Diversifying Our Narrative
At the August 25, 2020 meeting of the Board of Education, a group of students at Albany High School requested that the district diversify the literature that is taught in all grades to ensure that diverse and anti-racist texts are required reading. The Albany Disability Squad supports this initiative and would like to widen the definition of diversity to include the voices and stories of people with disabilities. To do this, we plan to create a regular column to feature “disability lit” for people of all ages.

Click on the book cover for more information.

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Anniversary of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
September 26 is the anniversary of signing of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This act is a landmark in the disability rights movement in the United States. In addition to prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability in the employment practices of the federal government and its contractors, this federal legislation extended the civil rights of students with disabilities education in Section 504. This is where the term “504 Plan” comes from. Under the Rehabilitation Act, school districts are required to provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to students whose disabilities interfere with their classroom learning. 504 Plans provide services and changes in the learning environment to support students in general education, whereas IEPs provide individualized special education and specific other services for students in a variety of classroom placements.

About Albany Disability Squad
The Albany Disability Squad was founded in May of 2020 when a group of parents of students with disabilities united to protest budget cuts to Special Education proposed to the AUSD Board of Education. The cuts passed, but we’ve helped convince the district to walk some of them back. Going forward, we will focus on advocating for students with disabilities and supporting their families. Please visit the Albany Disability Squad website for more information.

Want to get more involved with the Albany Disability Squad?
Contact us. We’d love to have you join a work group!

Thanks to...
- Daniel Cardozo and June McIntyre for creating the new Albany Disability Squad logo (see above). Coming soon: mugs and T-shirts!
- Nery Castillo-McIntyre for organizing the School Board Candidates forum
- Kelley Callahan for facilitating the Family Support Group
- Amy Apel for creating the Albany Disability Squad website