



Statement of the Anaheim Union High School District Regarding Consultant Contracts

April 25, 2024

The District welcomes scrutiny of all public business and strives to make information available to anyone who would like to receive it. However, recent rumors and accusations about “special relationships” and implied corruption related to the District’s contracts with outside consultants are unfounded and reckless and may constitute defamation with respect to the individuals involved. These are not just names on a piece of paper. They are real people with real lives, business interests, and feelings. They are also important thought leaders who have chosen to give their time and expertise to the District because they believe in our mission and vision. There is no place for false statements, misrepresentation, or blatant speculation in a community that values kindness and compassion. We can and should do better.

For an accurate description of the consultant contracts that are currently being mischaracterized in public discussion, please read below. All of these agreements were publicly available for review and comment at the time they were approved. You may read the agendas and contracts by clicking on the hyperlinks provided in the text. As a reminder, regular meetings of the Board of Trustees are live streamed on the [AUHSD Communications YouTube channel](#) and archived for later reference. We appreciate everyone who has a genuine interest in the District and the wellbeing of our entire community, and we encourage you to think critically and act responsibly when confronted with rumor and innuendo.

[eKadence](#)
[Inflexion](#)
[Lumicend](#)
[Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance](#)
[TeachFX & Brazer Education Consulting](#)
[Youth Engage](#)

eKadence

On February 6, 2020, the Board of Trustees approved a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with [AT Solutions Group LLC](#) to develop and implement the eKadence learning management software in the District. On October 13, 2022, the MOU was assigned to [eKadence Learning Foundation LLC](#), a California nonprofit public benefit corporation. eKadence is a state-of-the-art learning management system (LMS), designed by teachers and counselors, and focused on 5C digital badging and integration with the student information system (i.e., Aeries). It is a gift to the District from its founder, Tim Nguyen, a philanthropist and businessman committed to providing a system tailored directly to the needs and drivers of the District, as defined by District stakeholders. Contrary to misinformation circulating in the community, Dr. John Ahn is not affiliated with eKadence,

nor is any District Trustee or administrator, including the Superintendent, affiliated with eKadence or related to Mr. Nguyen.

Pursuant to the MOU, the LMS is provided to the District at no cost for a five-year term ending on February 6, 2025. The District MOU will automatically renew under the same terms for another five years beginning in 2025. Previously, the District paid approximately \$135,000 per year for LMS services (Schoology, acquired by PowerSchool). With inflation, the District would likely be paying \$160,000 to \$200,000 per year for LMS services today. Over five years, this represents significant savings to the District of \$675,000 on the low end to \$1,000,000 on the high end. Entering a new five-year period next year, that savings doubles. At this stage of the twenty-first century, especially having only recently emerged from a global pandemic, it would be irresponsible not to have an LMS. The District is grateful to have a robust and responsive LMS at no cost.

Over 95% of District teachers have used eKadence this year, with nearly 5,000 sections synced, 11,045 announcements, 464,095 activities and 140,752 grades. This usage compares favorably to our previous LMS, which hovered around 67%. Just under 50% of District teachers are currently using the eKadence gradebook district-wide. In addition to using eKadence online, parents can now access their student's gradebook as an app on their phone. Parents can click this [link](#) to access the app and step by step instructions how to set up and use the app. Some have questioned why the District is not using Google Classroom. One reason is limitation on parent access, which is not in line with the District's approach to community schools, whole child, and family agency. eKadence, on the other hand, provides a no-cost alternative that meets these needs.

With the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), eKadence has continued to work with District stakeholders to integrate AI tools and supports into (and within) the LMS to assist students and staff with teaching and learning. Importantly, building these tools into and within the LMS ensures safeguards are in place for our students and staff. On March 7, 2024, the District approved an add-on [contract](#) with eKadence to provide AI tools at a cost of \$450,000 for four years of service, which breaks down to \$112,000 per year (or \$4.50 per student per year based on 25,000 ADA). With AI technologies radically changing, the current per-Average Daily Attendance (ADA) pricing for AI tools ranges from approximately \$10 to over \$39. As an example, the District's 25,000-ADA base would result in a total cost of \$250,000 to \$975,000 per year for AI tools for every student based on current market prices. Some have suggested that we should be using Google tools; however, Google Gemini is even more expensive, at \$30 per user per month, and is restricted to users eighteen years and older. Thus, the District is already saving money on this premium service, which will provide tremendous value to our students and teachers. There is also a possibility of revenue generation for the District in the future through a revenue sharing model.

One of the premium AI tools being integrated into eKadence is "sKrappy," an artificial intelligence bot that will serve as a personal assistant to our students and teachers. sKrappy was named by AUHSD students who participated in the Anaheim's Innovative Mentoring Experience (AIME) over the summer with eKadence. The students wanted "sKrappy" to be a friendly tutor/support to students which is why the icon is a puppy. Additionally, "sKrappy" represents resilience, hard work, and a commitment to improving.

We are proud of and grateful for the philanthropic nonprofit work of eKadence and Mr. Nguyen to provide an exemplary no-cost LMS supporting the needs of the District's diverse and talented student body.

Inflexion

Inflexion is a nonprofit consulting group based in Eugene, Oregon, that helps educators better equip students for success. Inflexion is committed to ensuring all students receive what they need to succeed. The Executive Director, Matt Coleman, has been a longtime thought partner with the District on moving away from "teaching to the test" and providing our students with a holistic approach to teaching and learning centered around the 5Cs.

Inflexion was contracted through the Orange County Department of Education to lead the rollout of Multiple Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for Orange County by providing training to Orange County school districts, including AUHSD, on MTSS implementation. MTSS is a tiered approach to support students with academic and social/emotional needs from a baseline level applicable to all students through a progression to the highest level of need at tier 3. Inflexion played an integral role in the District's implementation of MTSS.

The District has worked with Inflexion for over nine years. Through Inflexion, the District received a grant from the Hewlett Packard Foundation to fund the revisioning process at sixteen of our school sites. "Revisioning" is an opportunity for the school community, including teachers, counselors, administrators, students, families, and community partners, to come together to engage in dialogue around a shared identity and vision for college, career, and life success. Nearly all of the District's schools have gone through the revisioning process. For the past several years, the District has worked with Inflexion to support three to four schools per year with revisioning. The two remaining schools, Cypress and Magnolia high schools, are slated to go through the revisioning process with Inflexion this upcoming school year (2024-25).

Inflexion's Portico program has also provided District administrators with professional development in the form of one-on-one coaching, monthly networked improvement community engagements, implementation guides, virtual breakout sessions, and grab-and-go resources aligned to transforming schools for up to nine site administrators. To date, administrators at Anaheim, Gilbert, Kennedy, Savanna, and Western high schools and Brookhurst, Sycamore, and South junior high schools have benefited from Inflexion's work to (a) implement systems supporting students developing readiness for college, career, and, life; b) build the necessary skills and dispositions to lead systemic change; (c) support each other's efforts by sharing resources and lessons learned; and (d) share an implementation framework to sustain school level efforts over time and potential turnover.

We are proud of the District's longstanding and continuing work with Inflexion, which has directly touched and improved every school site across the District. We are also proud of our own Manuel Colón whose commitment to the District, even after retirement following a distinguished thirty-year career, is demonstrated by his new role at Inflexion to continue moving the District forward. Recent District contracts with Inflexion for this important work can be reviewed [here](#) and [here](#).

Lumicend

The United States Student and Exchange Visitor Program authorizes the District to enroll international students with an F-1 Visa to study at a District school for one year on a tuition basis. As part of its commitment to grow its international programs, which create exchanges exposing both the international students and District students to different cultures and experiences, the District commissioned a comprehensive analysis by [Dr. John Ahn](#) of international market opportunities in Asia for the District's international program, including

an analysis of the Asian market, opportunities, the international education program, and the feeder school program for the District's international program.

Dr. Ahn is a respected education consultant, with expertise in new school development, international WASC accreditation, and strategic planning. Over the past two decades, he has provided consultation services to K-12 schools, colleges, and universities, both in the United States and internationally. His broad range of areas of expertise includes new school and program development, education industry analysis for both domestic and international markets, accreditation, curriculum development for international programs, as well as strategic planning. Dr. Ahn has also provided guidance and support to domestic and international families in the areas of student learning and leadership development. He has conducted educational seminars in various countries, including South Korea, China, Vietnam, and the United States.

Following Dr. Ahn's report, the District entered into a licensing agreement with [Lumicend](#) on August 10, 2023. Lumicend is a limited liability company owned by Tim Nguyen. Pursuant to the agreement, Lumicend acts as a third party to facilitate non-exclusive partnerships with international schools to expand the District's F-1 Visa program and receives a license to use the District's name, trademarks, logos, trade dress, and other intellectual property for the purpose of establishing and operating international schools and/or programs in Asia with the goal of increasing F-1 Visa student participation within District schools. To be clear, Lumicend pays the District, not the other way around. This agreement provides revenue to the District and bolsters an important program.

We are optimistic about the continued growth of the District's international program. Although the pandemic had a direct impact on slowing international exchanges, the program has come back in recent years. If you are interested in learning more about our international students, you may watch [AUHSD International Students](#) and [From Germany to Gridiron](#) on our AUHSD Communications YouTube channel.

Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance (OCAPICA)

OCAPICA was established in 1997 with the mission to build a healthier and stronger community by enhancing the well-being of underserved student populations through inclusive partnerships in the areas of service, education, advocacy, organizing, and research. OCAPICA has provided services such as social, emotional, and academic support groups, career development, civic engagement, food and housing vouchers, as well as community services for students and families across the District's high school sites, dedicating eight to twelve OCAPICA staff members per year to the District and investing approximately \$500,000 in the AUHSD community every year.

In 2023, [OCAPICA](#) agreed to support the development of the District's Biotechnology Program at Anaheim High School by helping with the development of curriculum and assessments leading to certification in biotechnology, research internship opportunities, and development of collaborative projects between Western High School's iLab, Magnolia High School's Magnolia Agriscience Community Center (MACC), and Anaheim High School's Biotechnology Pathway. This work was done by Victor Pham, Ph.D., an ROP teacher and professional in the biotechnology field. Later, when it heard about the K12 AI Deeper Learning Summit, OCAPICA once again stepped up to the plate to support the District.

This kind of generous and supportive action on the part of our community partners helps the entire District grow and offer myriad diverse opportunities to our students and families. The

fact that OCAPICA was originally started to support the Asian and Pacific Islander community has absolutely zero bearing on its commitment and contributions to the District as a whole. We are proud of and grateful for our relationship with OCAPICA and the ongoing support it provides to the District.

TeachFX & Brazer Education Consulting

[TeachFX](#) is an organization that provides consultative and professional learning services to school districts using the TeachFX software tool that the organization has developed. The TeachFX software is a reflective instruction tool that is designed to allow teachers to see evidence of and track progress toward the realization of classrooms that exhibit the 5Cs of collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, and compassion and character.

The District's partnership with TeachFX began in November 2018 as a pilot focused on better engaging students, and English learners (EL) in particular, to meet the District's EL Task Force goal that students speak 30% of the time during a class period. A presentation of data and teacher feedback from this pilot is available [here](#). With AUHSD's focus on promoting the 5Cs, Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) priorities, and the Career Preparedness Systems Framework (CPSF), the partnership has grown and TeachFX has adopted a more holistic approach in its work with the district. Today, TeachFX has become a key professional learning partner of the District, through the use of the TeachFX app alongside workshops, dedicated opportunities for educators to reflect on their classroom discourse data, and leadership development.

The TeachFX app has been used by over 400 District teachers across fourteen schools in programs such as Induction, Project LEARN, through site-based initiatives, and with teacher leaders such as 5Cs coaches and department chairs. District teachers have recorded approximately 2,000 lessons, and teachers who have recorded at least 6 lessons increased their student talk percentage from 14.1% to 32.8%, based on their TeachFX data. An AUHSD teacher using TeachFX is getting more instructional feedback in one month than a typical tenured teacher in the U.S. receives in six years.

David Brazer, Ph.D. (Stanford University), retired from TeachFX in 2022 but continued his work in the District in a different capacity as a [consultant](#). Dr. Brazer has more than forty years of experience teaching secondary school, working as an assistant principal and principal in high schools, consulting with large and small school districts, and researching, writing, and teaching in graduate education leadership programs at George Mason University and Stanford University. He is the author of numerous peer-reviewed articles and four books on school leadership and organizational design. His expertise and skills in leadership and organizational development are sought after as a means of generating continuous improvement in schools and school districts. While teaching at Stanford, Dr. Brazer helped design and teach in the Stanford EdLEADers program that focused on leadership development at the district level.

Dr. Brazer's current work in the District facilitates action research driven by research questions focused on student voice and purpose in District classrooms, as well as facilitating workshops for District Office staff to change the trajectory of post-pandemic student attendance patterns to improvise instruction, delivery of mental health and social services, and continuous improvement processes at every District site. Action research at school sites will be implemented district-wide starting in fall of 2025. The final product of the action research process will be each school's specific, detailed, and actionable School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA). SPSAs will be evidence-based, serve as a roadmap for School

Leadership Teams in the 2025-26 year, and provide a common understanding between the school sites and the District Office regarding school improvement efforts and anticipated outcomes in the coming year. This effort goes to the heart of the District's need to emerge from the state's improvement program by helping each of the schools to elevate student voice and purpose in the classroom, and to do so equitably across all of the District's student subpopulations.

Recently, Dr. Brazer and Superintendent Matsuda collaborated during their own time on a personal project together, resulting in *Educating for Purposeful Life: A New Conception of Schooling for the 21st Century*, published by Harvard Education Press in 2023. Their book utilizes publicly available data to tell the story of the District's remarkable success shifting instructional focus from test scores to post-graduation success in higher education, career, and life. Their passion project was not written with a goal of compensation, and Superintendent Matsuda has graciously pledged his share of any royalties of approximately \$1.80 per book to the District's AIME program.

We are proud of our ongoing partnership with TeachFX and Dr. Brazer. Together, our work has powerfully moved the District's focus on student voice and purpose forward.

Youth Engage

Under the leadership of founder and president Brian Brady, [Youth Engage](#) oversaw the project planning, implementation, and partnership for the [K12 AI Deeper Learning Summit](#) in Anaheim. The K12 AI Deeper Learning Summit was co-hosted by the District, University of California Irvine School of Education, Digital Promise, and aiEDU. Lead funding for this partnership was provided by Orange County Board of Supervisors. Hundreds of educators from around the U.S. and three other countries attended and benefited from the event. The K12 AI Deeper Learning Summit generated approximately \$500,000 in revenue and produced a \$100,000 net positive surplus after expenses of \$400,000 (including the \$70,000 contractor fee) to the AUHSD Foundation to support future AUHSD educational initiatives.

With thirty years of experience working in nonprofit leadership, youth civic engagement, and youth development, Mr. Brady brings expertise in helping school communities improve their youth engagement models, including implementation of the District's [Career Preparedness Systems Framework](#). Through his work, Youth Engage has brought over \$1,000,000 of revenue to the District and Foundation over the last two years. In addition to the K12 AI Deeper Learning Summit, Mr. Brady was responsible for securing \$500,000 over two years from the [Chan Zuckerberg Initiative](#), supported components to fulfill grant requirements from the [Stuart Foundation](#) and Kauffman Foundation, including a \$150,000 renewal from the Stuart Foundation, and helped develop the Future Schools Learning Labs and marketing for the Community Schools Lab that is sold out for the upcoming year.

We are incredibly grateful for the work done on behalf of the District by Youth Engage and Mr. Brady. His efforts not only pay for themselves but provide a remarkable rate of return for the District as a whole.