

## Panel Bios:

**Irene Hightower**, Principal, San Diego Unified School District

Irene has been an educator for over 25 years. She began her educational experience as a classroom aide, then became a classroom teacher, district resource teacher, and is currently the Principal at Cabrillo Elementary School in Point Loma. A defining moment in her career was leading a team of education specialists at a school of over 1,000 students, with 100% Title I, 83% English Learners and over 100 students identified with a disability to become fully inclusive with all students in general education classrooms. Irene is a true believer in every child succeeding and looks forward to seeing the growth in the students she works with every single day.

**Dr. Rebecca Brooks** is an assistant professor in the special education teacher preparation and graduate program in the School of Education at California State University San Marcos. Dr. Brooks has taught in public educational settings ranging from kindergarten to high school as an inclusion support teacher. She has worked with individuals with developmental disabilities in educational, recreational, vocational, and residential settings for more than 25 years. She is a nationwide presenter and consultant in the areas of best practices for inclusive education and peer tutoring support systems.

**Michael Norman** is the Coordinator of Clinical Practice and University Supervisor for Mild/Moderate and Moderate/Severe special education programs in the School of Education at California State University San Marcos. He taught for 35 years in public schools in elementary and high school settings, teaching students with identified exceptionalities. He has presented and consulted with schools and districts regarding inclusive education and creating inclusive schools. During his time in public education he worked with a team to change the educational setting for students with identified exceptionalities from placements in segregated classrooms to being fully included in general education.

**Summer Stech** is a private practice attorney with a focus in special education and disability rights. She has served as the Program Director and Legal Advocacy Coordinator for TACA – Talk About Curing Autism and was a former Program Specialist for Coronado Unified School District in the Pupil Personnel Services department. Prior to that, Ms. Stech was an Equal Justice Works fellow with the Legal Aid Society of San Diego, Inc. (sponsored by Latham & Watkins LLP) where in 2006 she developed the Children & Youth Advocacy Project (CYAP). She has held positions as a law clerk for Protection & Advocacy Inc. in San Diego, Disability Rights Advocates in Oakland, the Special Education Clinic at USD, and the Children's Advocacy Institute at USD. In addition to her legal work, Ms. Stech teaches Legislation, Leadership and Management at San Diego State University. Prior to entering law school, she worked as a special education teacher with the San Diego Unified School District, specializing in full inclusion and secondary transition

**Justin Shinnefield** is a senior partner in the San Diego, Cerritos and Irvine offices of Atkinson, Andelson, Loya, Ruud & Romo. Mr. Shinnefield represents California school districts and community college districts in education, special education and student discipline. He provides interpretation and assessment of issues arising under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. He served as an extern with Protection and Advocacy, Inc. while in law school. While at Pepperdine University, Mr. Shinnefield studied special education and Americans with Disabilities Act issues. He served as an extern with Protection and Advocacy, Inc. while in law school. Mr. Shinnefield is a contributor to the firm's publications.