



## Congratulations Laura Dern! 2023 Exceptional Parent of the Year



Laura Dern is a parent of a child from Bay Area Intermediate School District. She is a strong advocate for her daughter both within the school as well as outside of the district. Her friendly demeanor, willingness to open her home to providers, and problem-solving attitude make her an active and essential member of her daughter's planning team. Her openness has allowed staff to embed AAC within her child's routine not only at school but also at home.

Laura has been active in every element of her child's IEP from choosing devices, recommending new communication choice/vocabulary boards, and just being involved in her care at home and her education at school. This collaboration allowed us to get an eye gaze communication device when her daughter was in Early On, which carried directly into her classroom setting. Parent participation in this device selection was crucial and has led to a largely expanded vocabulary and means of communication for her child. Laura is positive, thoughtful, kind, and committed.

She takes the time to send emails to staff and administration about how the program is supporting her child. She never hesitates to remind staff of the difference they are making. This empowers her team to do more and supports a team of educators who often can feel that their work goes unnoticed.

In her community, Laura advocates for connecting outpatient providers with the school team. She assists with making those connections, participates in all team meetings, and makes sure that her voice and her daughter's voice are heard. While Laura often recognizes others, she is humble about her own contributions. She often seems unaware of her superpowers, and that the love she gives to her children is what has made all the difference. As a mother, she inspires me and as a professional she motivates me to learn more, continue to fight for inclusion, and to insist on the highest standards of practice in our early childhood settings.