



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council
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March 17, 2015

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

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Mr. Don Horner, Chair
Hawaii State Board of Education
P. O. Box 2360
Honolulu, HI 96804

RE: VII. D. Board Action on authorization of Department of
Education to negotiate and execute the renewal and revision of
ESEA Flexibility from No Child Left Behind ("NCLB")

Dear Chair Horner and Members of the Board,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State
Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education
Act (IDEA), supports the Department's request to execute a renewal
and revision of its ESEA Flexibility Waiver. However, we request
that additional assurances be included in the revision to ensure
accountability for the achievement of students with disabilities.

SEAC expressed concern in its comments to the Department's initial
waiver application in 2012 over the creation of a High Needs Group.
We feared both then and now that aggregating subgroups can mask
uneven performance among the individual groups--students with
disabilities, students who are English Language Learners, and students
who are disadvantaged.

Students with disabilities account for about 10.5% of students in
all grades. For most public school campuses, students who are
disadvantaged make up a much larger percentage of the student
body. Additionally, their performance on statewide assessments is
significantly higher than students with disabilities. In SY 13-14,
disadvantaged students were 59% proficient in reading compared to
only 21% proficiency for special education students.

This inequity in population size and performance can lead to potential
skewing of StriveHI school rankings. For example, Mokapu
Elementary was awarded Recognition School status in SY 13-14,
despite the fact that only 12% of special education students were



proficient in reading compared to 84% proficiency in the overall student population. Mokapu also had a Two Year Gap Reduction Rate of 23%, while special education reading proficiency was down almost ten percentage points from 2012-13.

SEAC was assured by the Department in November 2013 that STRIVE HI is maintaining accountability for special education achievement. At the same time, we are painfully aware that special education student achievement is woefully behind the achievement of non-disabled students and virtually flat-lined over a number of years. Our problem with the current accountability system is two-fold:

- reform efforts have left special education students largely untouched, and
- the STRIVE HI system appears less than transparent when reporting the performance of students with disabilities.

We respectfully request that the Department make some adjustments to its waiver renewal to address these concerns. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this issue. If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

Respectfully,

Ivalee Sinclair, Chair