



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council

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March 17, 2015

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Mr. Brian De Lima, Chair
Finance and Infrastructure Committee
Hawaii State Board of Education
P. O. Box 2360
Honolulu, HI 96804

RE: V. A. Committee Action on Committee recommendations
concerning the following policies in the Board's proposed 300
policy series: 304.2 Family and Community Engagement

Dear Chair De Lima and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), Hawaii's State
Advisory Panel under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
(IDEA), appreciates that the Board's current draft of Policy 304.2
includes some of the recommendations presented to the Board by the
SCR 79 Workgroup. The Workgroup was convened by the Department
in 2012 with SEAC and eight other family organizations.

SEAC strongly supports renaming this policy, revising existing
language, and adding a sixth directive to bring this policy in line with
national practices and to improve student outcomes by encouraging
families to be actively partnering with their children's teachers and
administrators.

Specifically, we recommend the following:

- 1) Change the name of the policy from **Family and Community
Engagement to Family-School Partnership**.

Rationale: More than the term "engagement", the concept of
"partnership" recognizes that families, educators, and school
staff share responsibility for student growth and learning. SEAC
believes that community engagement should be the subject of a
new policy, as the activities and relationships between community
organizations and schools do not necessarily mirror those of
families and schools.



- 2) Change the third bullet--“Assigning formal responsibility, accountability and necessary authority for partnership implementation to appropriate staff”--to read “Assigning formal responsibility, accountability and necessary authority for partnership implementation to staff at the State, Complex Area and School level.”

Rationale: There must be designated activities and accountability at all levels of the Department’s administration in order for the desired outcomes to occur.

- 3) Change the fifth bullet--“Providing adequate and appropriate time, resources and opportunities for families and communities to provide meaningful input into all relevant programs and services.”--to read “Providing adequate and appropriate time, resources and opportunities to include families in the design, implementation, evaluation and oversight of all relevant programs and services.”

Rationale: There must be opportunities for families to be included in all phases of service delivery to students to ensure that student and family strengths and needs are reflected in the delivery of appropriate services and supports to students.

- 4) Add a sixth bullet to read as follows:
“Establishing statewide standards, administrative guidelines, associated metrics/indicators, timelines and reporting requirements that support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of family-school partnerships based upon national evidence-based best practices including, but not limited to:

Standard 1: Welcoming all families into the school community—Families are active participants in the life of the school and feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class.

Standard 2: Communicating effectively—Families and school staff engage in regular two-way, meaningful communication about student learning.

Standard 3: Supporting student success—Families and school staff continuously partner to support students’ learning and healthy development both at home and at school, and have regular opportunities to strengthen their knowledge and skills to do so effectively.

Standard 4: Speaking up for every child—Families are empowered to be advocates for their own and other children, to ensure that students are treated fairly and have access to learning opportunities that will support their success.

Standard 5: Sharing power—Families and school staff are equal partners in decisions that affect children and families and together inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs.

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Standard 6: Partnering with community—Families and school staff partner with community members to connect students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation.

Rationale: Without specific standards for family-school partnerships, there would be great variability between schools and complexes. SEAC believes these standards set a base expectation for ALL schools. They are adapted from the **PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships** which shift the focus from what schools should do to involve parents to what parents, schools, and communities can do *together* to support student success. These standards are based on evidence-based practices and have been adopted by numerous states and municipalities. They also offer a no cost Implementation Guide that assists schools in setting goals to accomplish each standard. The Guide can be found online at http://www.pta.org/files/National_Standards_Implementation_Guide_2009.pdf.

These PTA National Standards have also been adapted into **Family Partnership Guidelines for Early Childhood Settings** by the Hawaii Executive Office on Early Learning. They were intentionally aligned with the SCR 79 Workgroup's proposed Family-School Partnership Policy.

Examples of the need for clear standards are reflected in input that SEAC receives on a regular basis. Our March 13th SEAC meeting included testimony from several individuals of how public schools they visited failed to provide a welcoming climate (Standard 1), and how this eroded their trust in the Department. SEAC has attached a document indicating goals under each Family-School Partnership standard with indicators and examples.

SEAC believes the recommendations above are substantive and not mere semantics. We thank you for your consideration of them. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

Ivalee Sinclair, Chair