



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council

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December 1, 2015

**Special Education
Advisory Council**

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to the military*

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Amanda Kaahanui, Staff

Susan Rocco, Staff

Ms. Patricia Halagao, Chair
Student Achievement Committee
Hawaii State Board of Education
P. O. Box 2360
Honolulu, HI 96804

RE: Agenda Item IV. D. Update on achievement data in high needs categories (English Language Learners, Free and Reduced Lunch, and Special Education)

Dear Chair Halagao and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council's review of 2015 SBA data at our December 13th SEAC meeting generated the following concerns that we would like to share with this Committee and the Department:

Special Education Student Achievement

Achievement was abysmal overall for students with IEPs. Only about one in 10 special education students is proficient in math and English Language Arts (ELA). The performance gap with non-high needs students is 56 percentage points in ELA and 49 percentage points in math.

High Needs Group Calculations Skew Results Upwards

In reviewing the Department's data posted on its **Strive HI: Student Group Performance Report**, SEAC noticed a striking contrast in proficiency rates for ELL students between the September 24, 2015 report and the November 5, 2015 report (see attachments). The September report listed the math and ELA proficiency rates of students *currently* receiving ELL supports, while the November report added in students who had recently exited ELL. This one change brought up ELA performance from 4% to 32% and math performance from 8% to 30%! The revelation to SEAC is that students receiving current ELL services are actually *underperforming* students with IEPs. This not only makes additional supports for this group of students (many of whom also receive special education supports) more critical, but it also skews the calculation for the High Needs Group. If the Department only used



scores for students eligible to receive special education and ELL services, rather than lumping in the scores of recently exited students, the achievement gap between high needs students and non-high needs students would widen. It would also shine more light on the fact that disadvantaged students who make up the bulk of the High Needs Group are outperforming students with IEPs and students receiving ELL services by a ratio of 3 or 4 to one. In a sense, these higher performing disadvantaged students are masking the extremely low performance of ELL and SPED students.

In its actions to improve student equity, the Department acknowledges the importance of increasing resources for special education and ELL students. We find these latest SBA scores create a sense of urgency in prioritizing supports, personnel and innovative strategies to our students who are most at risk of academic failure.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martha Guinan/SR".

Martha Guinan
Chair