



**S E A C**  
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**Special Education  
Advisory Council**

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Hawaii State Board of Education  
P. O. Box 2360  
Honolulu, HI 96814

RE: V. C. Board Action on metrics to monitor and evaluate the Department of Education's comprehensive plan for reopening schools for the 2020-2021 School Year: revisions to metrics, new metrics, and new metric categories

Dear Chair Payne and Members of the Board,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is in agreement with the Board's proposed plan to revise existing school reopening metrics and add new metrics to monitor and evaluate the Department's progress in meeting key priorities set by the Board. We concur with the focus on closing gaps in academic achievement, access to devices and connectivity, health & safety, the delivery of school transportation & food services, and the confidence of families and the Board in the Department's ability to meet the needs of students in the context of the current pandemic.

SEAC is most appreciative of the Board's ongoing commitment to meet the needs of students most vulnerable to disruptions in learning. At the same time, we believe that the proposed metrics related to these students need more specificity to ensure that students with disabilities are not disproportionately harmed by the current constraints on the delivery of individualized educational supports. Here are our recommendations:

**Recommendation 1: Disaggregate quarterly grades for students in all grades by key student subgroups. If disaggregation for all high needs subgroups is burdensome to schools, prioritize at a minimum the reporting of academic performance for students with disabilities.**

Rationale: Students with disabilities have long been the lowest performing subgroup in academic achievement in the areas of math, ELA and science. The achievement gap between students with IEPs and students without high needs is larger than with any other subgroup, and it has not gotten smaller despite public attention to the disparity over the last decade. Historically, when the performance of students with disabilities is pooled into a high needs subgroup which also includes English Learners and students who are economically challenged, the overall performance of the



pooled group masks the reality that students with IEPs are significantly underperforming the other two groups.

SEAC believes that academic performance data for students with disabilities is readily available to schools and complexes given the IDEA requirement to provide quarterly reports on IEP goals. Additionally, schools have been advised to hold IEP meetings for all students during the 1st Quarter in order to assess whether students experienced skill(s) loss during school closures. That IEP review requires gathering available academic performance data.

**Recommendation 2: Disaggregate the High-risk Attendance Gap Formula and the Vulnerable Student High-risk Attendance Gap Formula to include specific attendance data for students with IEPs.**

Rationale: Students with disabilities have had the highest rate of chronic absenteeism (about 24%) as reflected in Strategic Plan data over the past five years. While some students with disabilities are being served through in-person instruction on campus (making it much easier to document attendance), SEAC believes that population of students on campus is reflective of students with more significant disabilities as well as preschool children. The majority of students with IEPs are students with milder disabilities like learning disabilities, speech delays, emotional disabilities, etc. who are more likely to be included in general education classrooms. We believe that the Board's **in-person learning metric** will reveal that they are not consistently on campus to receive support. These same students are likely to struggle with distance learning without the same level of specially designed instruction as they traditionally receive on a school campus and are at higher risk of poor attendance with online learning activities.

SEAC is aware that the Board considered disaggregating data for students with disabilities and is encouraging the Department to do so. However, SEAC strongly holds that making this data part of the Department's accountability to the Board will highlight disparities in a more timely manner and help to redirect resources to the students who are in greatest need of them to succeed academically.

Mahalo for this opportunity to express our views. SEAC stands ready to work collaboratively with the Department and the Board to find creative solutions to the delivery of quality educational services to students with disabilities.

Respectfully,

  
Martha Quinan  
Chair

  
Ivalee Sinclair  
Legislative Committee Chair