



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council

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Advisory Council**

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Lance Mizumoto, Chair
Hawaii State Board of Education
P. O. Box 2360
Honolulu, HI 96804

RE: V. D. Update on public comment process for Every Student
Succeeds Act ("ESSA") consolidated state plan draft

Dear Chair Mizumoto and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) provided collective feedback on the ESSA state plan draft to Assistant Superintendent Chun in mid-May. In our comments we expressed agreement with certain elements of the plan, advised some changes to the plan, and requested clarification of several plan elements. Given that the timeline for the Department to submit its final draft for Board approval is June 20th, we ask that the revised draft document be posted on the Board's website as soon as possible, so that all interested stakeholders have the time to digest any changes and comment on them.

Specific clarifications we seek in the final document are as follows:

Teacher Certification for Special Education Teachers

The assurances the draft plan is offering regarding teacher certification does not acknowledge the special education teacher who may be instructing students in multiple subject areas throughout a school day. While SEAC members' consensus is that it is not practical for special education teachers to demonstrate subject matter competence in all areas they are assigned to teach (for example, by passing PRAXIS in each subject), SEAC does recommend that the Department require special education teachers to complete some minimum requirements/coursework and demonstrate subject knowledge.

Identifying Schools for Support and Improvement

SEAC is in support of the plan to identify schools for support by school type--elementary, middle and high school--as a means to increase fairness and offer additional supports at all grade levels. We are confused, however, as to whether all 290 schools are covered under the ESSA plan, or only Title I schools. On page 38, the draft plan states



Identifying Schools for Support and Improvement (cont.)

that “the minimum required percentage of **Title I schools** identified for comprehensive support and improvement will be maintained at no less than 5%.” In the next sentence, the plan states that “**All** schools with low-performing or consistently underperforming subgroups will be identified for targeted support and improvement.”

SEAC emphatically recommends that the ESSA State Plan apply to all of Hawaii’s public schools. Under previous iterations of the Strive HI accountability system, we have seen schools acknowledged as recognition schools at the same time that their special education student population was consistently near the bottom of the achievement gap. The promise of ESSA is that student subgroup performance must be accounted for and prioritized for intervention, when appropriate, so that ALL students receive an education that meets their needs and prepares them for success as adults.

Minimum “n” Size for Statewide Accountability System

Given that a majority of respondents to the draft plan disagreed with utilizing an “n” size of 20 for accountability purposes, will the Department be proposing an alternate “n” size? SEAC’s unwavering position for the past four years is that the Department should adopt an “n” size of 10 students to in order to ensure that more academically vulnerable students are identified and provided supports. By the draft plan’s own calculations, using a proposed “n” size of 20 will exclude 15% of special education students and 36% of students who are English Learners. By contrast, an “n” size of 10 excludes only 5% of special education students from accountability reporting. In addition, the U.S. DOE uses 10 as the minimum number for reporting data related to special education and student discipline, as well as for protecting student privacy.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully,


Martha Guinan
SEAC Chair


Ivalee Sinclair
Legislative Committee Chair