



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council

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**Special Education
Advisory Council**

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Maggie Cox, Chair
Student Achievement Committee
Hawaii State Board of Education
P. O. Box 2360
Honolulu, HI 96804

RE: IV. A. Presentation on School Health Section and Services
Provided by the Department of Education

Dear Chair Cox and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is pleased to provide input on the important topic of school-based health services and to extend our welcome to Superintendent Kishimoto. SEAC supports the Department's efforts to improve school health services for all students, including students with disabilities. We wrote supportive testimony last legislative session for funding to expand the **Hawai'i Keiki: Healthy and Ready to Learn** program. We continue to have some concerns regarding this program and would like to pose some questions, along with the following observations, in reference to school health services and chronic absenteeism.

Observations:

- 1) In SY 2015-16, the Strive HI chronic absenteeism rate for all students statewide was 15%. In SY 2016-17, the rate had risen by one-third to 20.05%.
- 2) In SY 2015-16, the overall chronic absenteeism rate for Wai'anae High School and Wai'anae Intermediate was 39.5% and 37.8% respectively. By SY 2016-17, the rate had risen to 46.4% at Wai'anae High and 48.77% at Wai'anae Intermediate.
- 3) In SY 2015-16 the statewide rate of chronic absenteeism for special education students was 24.2%--nearly double the 13.7% rate for non-special education students.
- 4) Chronic absenteeism rates are influenced by acute and chronic health conditions (including mental health, dental health and obesity). They are also correlated to poverty, bullying, family crises, peer issues and a lack of motivation or interest in school.



Observations (cont.):

- 5) A critical strategy for improving the health of children and adolescents and addressing chronic absenteeism is working in partnership with parents and other family members.


Questions:

- 1) What does the Department postulate as factors contributing to the 33% rise in overall chronic absenteeism from SY 15-16 to SY 16-17?
- 2) What does the Department postulate as factors contributing to the 17% rise in chronic absenteeism at Wai'ananae High and 29% rise at Wai'ananae Intermediate from SY 15-16 to SY 16-17?
- 3) What was the overall chronic absenteeism rate for special education students in SY 16-17?
- 4) Is the Department keeping data on the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs in preventing and/or reducing chronic absenteeism?
- 5) How will family members and the school community be informed of the roles, responsibilities, and relationship between the DOH Public Health Nurses providing oversight to public schools and the **Hawaii Keiki** Advance Practice Registered Nurses?
- 6) How will family members and community partners be included in health education, early intervention and risk reduction?
- 7) How will family members and community partners, including local physicians, be included in the evaluation of school-based health services?

SEAC looks forward to receiving answers to our questions. We are committed to use our expertise and experiences as a broad based constituency group to work in partnership with the Department and the Board to improve the educational and health services of Hawai'i's public school keiki and their families.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on an important initiative. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Respectfully,


Martha Guinan
SEAC Chair


Ivalee Sinclair
Legislative Committee Chair