SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (SEAC)

Minutes - May 17, 2019

9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Call to Order/Welcome

Chair Martha Guinan called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

**Presentation of Dr. Seuss Books to Principal Arnie Kikkawa**

Martha asked Dale Matsuura, a member of the SSIP Infographic Work Group and whose suggestion was the catalyst for the book drive, to explain her work group’s goal of supporting parents of young students with disabilities in helping their child acquire reading skills. The collection of Dr. Seuss books for young readers was inspired by the National Education Association’s “Read Across America Day.” Pu‘uhale School was targeted to receive the book collection as a thank you for hosting SEAC’s monthly meetings. Principal Arnie Kikkawa expressed her appreciation for the books and related Dr. Seuss items. She talked about how fortunate Pu‘uhale’s library has been to have a stellar group of volunteer librarians that includes a retired District Superintendent, a retired professor and a retired teacher. Along with three other volunteers they consult with Pu‘uhale’s teachers and pull books that complement the subjects they are teaching.

**Introductions**

Members introduced themselves to Roxanne Rokero, the Administrator of the Special Education Section. In turn, she shared that she has been a teacher for 28 years and an administrator for the past several years, as well as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst. She believes the partnership with the Monitoring and Compliance Office and SEAC will help to improve services to students with disabilities.

**Announcements**

Draft Meeting Schedule for SY 19-20

Susan R. announced that SEAC meetings from August 2019 through March 2020 will be held on the 2nd Friday of the month. The April and May 2020 meetings were moved to the 4th Friday to due to room availability. All meetings will be held in the Pu‘uhale Library Meeting Room with the exception of April 24th, when the meeting will convene in the 2nd Floor Art Room.

Webinar for State Advisory Panels and State Interagency Coordinating Councils

JoAnn Cashman partnered with SEAC’s leadership group—including Drew, Steven, Martha and Susan R. to showcase Hawaii’s history with Leading by Convening and the development of infographics as a shared work product. Steven shared that the webinar attendees appeared very interested in our work, and a number of listeners indicated that they would pursue the LbC process and infographics in their own state groups.

Special Education Fiscal Work Group Meetings

Martha and Drew reported on the tentative recommendations of the group that grew out of a SPED Task Force recommendation to restructure the way special education school funding is apportioned. After a base funding of $100,000 per

school, 90% of the remaining dollars for special education staffing will be allocated directly to schools based on their head count on December 1st. Complex Area Superintendents will hold 5% aside for necessary adjustments. The draft recommendations will go to the Committee on Weights for feedback. A separate working group will be formed around developing a weight for special education students. Susan R. pointed out that Ivalee Sinclair has experience with previous deliberations of whether to add special education to the Weighted Student Formula.

HSA-Alt Assessment Work Group

Susan R. reported that she and Martha were invited by Sue Forbes to participate in a Workforce Investment Opportunity Act focused group formed by the Department’s Assessment Section to identify Smarter Balanced grade-level standards that are related to post school work activities. Kevin Bardsley-Marcial, who was also part of the group representing Bayada, added that it is a good idea to think about skills that need to be taught in relation to math, English Language Arts and science to get students with more significant disabilities ready for employment.

SPIN Conference Wrap-up

Amanda Kaahanui thanked SEAC members who staffed a SEAC informational table at the largest SPIN Conference to date—545 participants. She also thanked the CCCO for offering registration scholarships to teachers as well as parents, although word about the availability of scholarships did not reach some schools until the week prior to the conference. Community partners helped to fund 82 Neighbor Island parent airfare scholarships.

**Discussion Regarding Special Education Staffing Allocation**

The announcement regarding the Special Education Fiscal Work Group generated the following questions and comments from members:

Q. Did the Work Group take into account small elementary schools, for example, K-5 and only one special education teacher? A. Yes, there was an agreement that the existing formula based on proportionality isn’t working.

C. I would want to make sure the continuum of placements and services is available at a small school.

C. Principals really want flexibility in funding staff.

Q. What happens when your April count shows one number of students, but from May through the summer, you pick up an additional 75 students? A. What tends to happen is that the principal will talk to the district regional officer and the Complex Area Superintendent to ensure adequate staff. We see this phenomenon with preschool. The number of students tends to grow throughout the school year. One of the options is to use federal funds to provide more staffing.

Q. At one point, can an administrator say we have lots of students with high needs and need a fully self-contained classroom? How are positions secured in the middle of the year? A. I hope administrators talk to their District Educational Specialists (DES). There might be additional funding sources to help with staffing in highly transient areas and where there are inadequate supports.

**Special Education Parent Survey**

Amanda received a parent survey at her son’s recent IEP meeting and took exception to the wording of the letter accompanying the survey. It mentioned filling out the survey “if you have been an active participant in your child’s education.” Amanda asked if she makes that determination, or does the IEP team not hand out the survey, if they think a parent isn’t “active”? Members agreed that the letter gave off the wrong message. The parent survey is for every parent of a child with an IEP. Drew Saranillio said that the letter came from his office, but he didn’t write it and will make sure the letter is rephrased with a more welcoming message. Susan R. pointed out that the response rate to the survey is traditionally very low—only about 8%--and wonders if it is truly representative of most special education families. Lindsay Heller shared that her charter school cornered every parent with the survey on an iPad to get 100% participation.

**Review of April 5, 2019 Minutes**

Susan Wood pointed out several minor typos in the minutes.

Action: The minutes were approved as corrected.

**Membership Committee Report**

Rosie Rowe, Susan Wood and Annette Cooper served on the committee and reported on the following:

Membership Renewals

Members whose terms were expiring in May 2019 were contacted and asked if they would like to serve another term. Those opting to continue include Annette Cooper, Kaili Murbach, Patricia Sheehey, James Street, Steven Vannatta and Amy Wiech.

Nomination of New Members

Mary Brogan, the Chief of the Developmental Disabilities Division has indicated that she would like to attend meetings to represent her agency, now that Sage Goto has resigned. The committee also received three parent member applications—two from the Big Island and one from Leeward District. Members are recommending that the full Council forward the following parent nominations to the Superintendent for her approval:

Mark Disher, a parent from Kona with a preschooler attending Kealakehe Elementary, and

Andrea Anderson, a parent from Ewa Beach whose son is attending Campbell High School.

The Committee is still actively seeking 1-2 parents of young children with disabilities in order to meet the IDEA requirement of a majority of parent and persons with disabilities.

Nomination of SEAC Officers

The Committee approached Martha regarding her interest in serving another one-year term as Chair. She was willing to continue in her role, unless another member was eager to assume that position. Currently, SEAC’s by-laws call for three Vice-Chair positions. They are assigned to head three committees based on the priorities of the council when the by-laws were last amended—Student Success, Staff Success and Legislative. A discussion lead to the recommendation that members vote to retain the current Vice Chairs (Dale Matsuura, Patricia Sheehey and Ivalee Sinclair) and revisit the designation of committees in the new year. If the future discussion yields a decision to reduce the number of Vice Chair positions, then the by-laws would have to be formally amended.

**Election of Officers**

Based on the recommendations of the Membership Committee, the SEAC body voted unanimously to re-elect Martha Guinan as Chair, and Dale Matsuura, Patricia Sheehey and Ivalee Sinclair as Vice Chairs for the one-year term beginning July 1, 2019.

**Annual Report Discussion**

Susan R. discussed issues and welcomed input related to the development of SEAC’s Annual Report, due to Superintendent Kishimoto at the end of the school year.

Format

Susan plans to mirror last year’s format that includes an infographic insert of graphs depicting areas of concern for students with disabilities, a letter from the Chair, SEAC’s vision, mission and functions, our recommendations to the Superintendent and a summary of major activities undertaken during the year.

Student Data

Members were referred to the draft data infographic covering areas where students with disabilities have disparate outcomes from their nondisabled peers – proficiency on the Smarter Balanced Assessment and National Assessment of Educational Performance; rates of absenteeism, graduation and college-going rates, and rates of suspension. The infographic also highlights disparities between Hawaii’s data and national data on rates of mediation and written complaints, instructional time lost to suspensions, access to the general education curriculum and students with disabilities identified as eligible for special education.

Due Process Recommendations

Hawaii has seen a positive downward trend in the number of due process hearing requests over the last few years; however, Hawaii parents’ under-utilization of mediation is seen as problematic as is the ability of the public to access information about due process hearing requests and decisions on the Department’s website. Susan demonstrated the current difficulty of locating postings of redacted hearing decisions (an IDEA requirement) on the website as compared to other state websites that offer easily accessible and more comprehensive data on special education due process. Roxanne and Drew agreed with members that Hawaii’s posting needs to improve in order to meet the spirit of IDEA. Roxanne and Susan noted that there used to be much more accessible information on due process hearing decisions, and even written complaints, in past years, and they wondered what thought processes were behind changing the accessibility of the information.

Action: Drew will look into how to improve the public’s access to due process files.

**Discussion Regarding Special Education Due Process**

The discussion around due process recommendations generated the following additional comments and questions:

Q. Can a parent who files a written complaint get a summary of the report findings? A. I will check and get back to you.

C. We are doing a reflection and re-evaluation of our monitoring and compliance activities in order to keep up with changing practices.

C. Another thing to keep in mind regarding written complaints is the messenger. That person must be able to really relate to parents.

C. We received calls from two parents at the same school whose principal told them, “if you don’t like it, then file due process.” Neither parent wanted to take that formal a step; they just wanted to work together with the school on a reasonable solution for their child.

C. A similar incidence happened at my school, where a parent who didn’t agree with a speech therapy issue was told to just file a complaint, if they weren’t happy with the school’s decision.

C. These examples reflect on what kind of training principals receive. We have never gotten a report about the Principals’ Academy, and we hear about real problems with training. I would like to put this issue on a future agenda.

**Agenda Setting for August 9, 2019 Meeting**

Members suggested the following agenda items:

* Leadership training/Principal’s Academy update
* Review of by-laws and SEAC officer roles
* Update on the Department’s efforts to support incarcerated adult students who are eligible for IDEA services (by Nancy Gorman) and
* Infographic Work Group meetings/reports/presentations.

**Infographic Work Group Meetings**

Members met briefly in the three major work groups: inclusion, SSIP/reading, and disproportionality.

**Presentation of Certificates of Appreciation and Luncheon Discussion**

Drew recognized each member and presented him or her with a Certification of Appreciation for contributing to SEAC in School Year 2018-19. Members moved to the Bangkok Chef to continue their discussion of SEAC accomplishments and future directions over lunch. Susan and Amanda provided prizes for members with good attendance throughout the school year.