



S E A C
Special Education Advisory Council

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**Special Education
Advisory Council**

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

RE: VI. A. Committee Action on Department recommendations regarding policy changes to ensure board policies support the recommendations of the Special Education Task Force's 2018 summative report

Dear Chairperson Cox and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is in strong support of the Department's recommended changes to existing Board Policy 105-13, Inclusion. We also recommend that the Department and this committee further review Board Policy 101-7, School Climate and Discipline to develop stronger language addressing the harmful impact of suspensions on special education student academic performance, absenteeism and post-school outcomes.

Inclusion Policy (105-13)

The recommended policy language brings the policy into alignment with the research-based **Inclusive Practices Framework** developed by the Department with input from SEAC. This framework serves several functions as a clear delineation of standards of practice, an inventory of a school's baseline practices, and an assessment tool to measure progress. It represents the attainment of a key short-term recommendation of the **Special Education Task Force Summative Report**--to articulate a shared vision of inclusive education. This articulated vision must be mirrored in the revised inclusion policy.

School Climate and Discipline (101-7)

If you look at the implementation of this policy as it applies to students with disabilities, it clearly has not had the effect of reducing the rate of suspensions for students already vulnerable to academic failure. The suspension rate for students with IEPs has remained consistently about



three times higher than students without disabilities (source: IDEA 618 Data Reports). As a result, out-of-school suspensions disproportionately impact instruction for students with disabilities. Additionally, there is little evidence that suspensions deter students from misbehaving again.

SEAC strongly recommends that the Department and the Board consider capping the number of days students can be suspended in order to limit the amount of lost instructional time. Our schools already have many of the tools to address discipline in a more proactive way, including multi-tiered systems of supports, restorative practices, positive behavior interventions and supports, early warning systems and social-emotional learning. Until there is a clear policy that suspensions should be used as a last resort, we will continue to see the multitude of harmful effects that suspensions have on students with disabilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our recommendations and support. Should you have any questions regarding our testimony, please contact us.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan
SEAC Chair

Ivalee Sinclair
Legislative Committee Chair