

**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Minutes – December 9, 2022**

**9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** Sara Alimoot, Annette Cooper, Virginia Beringer, Debbie Cheeseman, Mark Disher, Lisa Garcia, Martha Guinan, Scott Hashimoto, Melissa Harper-Osai, Melissa Johnson, Amanda Kaahanui (staff), Tina King, Jennifer Leoiki-Drino, Dale Matsuura, Cheryl Matthews, Paul Meng, Carrie Pisciotto, Kau‘i Rezentos, Susan Rocco (staff), Roxanne Rokero (liaison to the Superintendent), Rosie Rowe, Steven Vannatta, Jasmine Williams, Susan Wood

**EXCUSED:** Mai Hall, Kiele Pennington, Ivalee Sinclair, Debora Uyeda, Lisa Vegas

**ABSENT:** Rick Bunny, Shana Cruz, Kerry Iwashita, Theresa Minami, Wendy Nakasone Kalani, Paula Whitaker

**GUESTS:** Michelle Arakawa, Tina Barcarse, Don Barrett, Nancy Borilez, Willie Cadena, Will Carlson, Heather Chapman, Verna Chinen, Chad Domingo, Patty Dong, Allison Eby, Jamia Green, Lynne Hironaka, Joshua Hoppe, Haruka Hopper, Sandy Jessmon, Annie Kalama, Jared Kono, Elaine Lee, Kapu Mamiya, Elise Matsumoto, Cynthia Mew, Judith Nomura, Kapuamaikalani Pickford, Lynn Romero, Amelia Russell, Travis Santos, Hwa Hee Sohn, Emalia Suehiro, Katherine Taylor, Noah Thompson, Ravae Todd, Brandi Wakabayashi, Mercy Watanabe, Hillary Watt, Brikena White, Kanani Wond, Angela Wong, Cheryl Yamamoto, Jacy Yamamoto

TOPIC	DISCUSSION/ACTION
<b>Welcome and General Overview</b>	Martha Guinan and Brikena White welcomed SEAC members and guests to the combination SEAC meeting/annual SPP/APR Stakeholder Engagement Meeting on behalf of SEAC, the Monitoring and Compliance Branch and the Exceptional Support Branch. Participants viewed a brief video around the concept of <i>laulima</i> --many hands working together--to symbolize the day’s activities.
<b>SPP/APR Indicators</b>	Brikena explained that the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that each state develop a State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report in partnership with stakeholders representing the special education community and to hold an annual review in preparation to filing a report with the Office of Special Education Programs. She reviewed the 17 indicators in the SPP/APR, differentiating between compliance indicators and results indicators (those whose targets are set by the state).
<b>Hawaii’s Areas for Improvement</b>	<p>OSEP’s determination of how well Hawaii is meeting both the letter and the spirit of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is based on reviewing targets and actual performance on specific compliance and results indicators. Hawaii has been in the “Needs Assistance” category for a number of years with the primary areas for improvement identified as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduation rates (Indicator 1)</li> <li>• Drop out rates (Indicator 2)</li> <li>• Participation of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders with IEPs in statewide assessments (Indicator 3)</li> <li>• Proficiency of 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students on the National Assessment of Education Performance</li> <li>• Secondary transition (Indicator 13).</li> </ul> <p>Hawaii has set 3 state priority areas for technical assistance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills among preschoolers ,</li> <li>2. Reading achievement of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders, and</li> <li>3. Appropriate secondary transition planning and services.</li> </ol>

<b>Breakout Discussion Groups</b>	Meeting participants divided into six discussion groups to review the data for specific key indicators, discuss current strategies for improvement, and offer additional improvement strategies. (See attached group notes).
<b>Group 1 Report</b>	<p>Susan Rocco reported for Group 1 – Graduation Rates (Indicator 1), Drop Out Rates (Indicator 2), and Suspensions and Expulsions (Indicator 4). She summarized the data findings as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slippage in graduation rates,</li> <li>• Improvement in drop out rates where there were fewer students dropping out, and</li> <li>• Suspensions of more than 10 days did not rise to the level of a discrepancy, but students with disabilities are being suspended more than students without disabilities.</li> </ul> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>graduation and drop out rates</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching out to students earlier in their high school journey and having them articulate their needs,</li> <li>• Addressing the needs of the whole family who may be having financial or employment difficulties,</li> <li>• Seeking out students who have dropped out and finding a way to bring them back to the school community.</li> </ul> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>suspensions</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change the mindset of school administrators to see that any suspension can be harmful to a student’s future success,</li> <li>• Employ alternatives to suspensions, such as peer mediation, and</li> <li>• Cap suspensions for middle and high school students.</li> </ul> <p><u>Improvement strategy for <b>suspensions, graduation rates and drop out rates</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including students in the general education classroom with support.</li> </ul> <p><u>Other discussion points:</u>                  Native Hawaiian students appear to have disproportionate rates of drop outs and suspensions and lower percentages of graduation. One group member noted that students from an indigenous culture who have been subjugated by a predominant western culture need to reconnect with their cultural beliefs and practices be celebrated for their unique gifts. Grants to promote Hawaiian cultural practices, like <i>lomi lomi</i>, are available but not pursued by school staff who are overwhelmed with other priorities.</p>
<b>Group 2 Report</b>	<p>Jacy Yamamoto reported for Group 2 – Participation and Proficiency on Statewide Assessments (Indicator 3). The group spent a lot of time reviewing data on participation for both the Smarter Balance and HSA-Alt statewide assessments and had less time for discussion on proficiency.</p> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>participation rates</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find ways to help students feel more confident about being successful on the assessment.</li> <li>• Make it easier for students to receive the same test accommodations that are utilized for classroom work.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Group 2 Report (cont.)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training for teachers on accommodations in the classroom and on assessments.</li> </ul> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>proficiency rates</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at high school resource rooms to provide support to students and build up their skills.</li> <li>• Provide a consistent curriculum to students who transfer to another school</li> </ul> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>participation in alternate assessments</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more professional development to teachers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 3 Report</b></p>	<p>Michelle Arakawa reported for Group 3 on School age LRE (Indicator 5) and Steven Vannatta reported on Parent Involvement (Indicator 8).</p> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>increasing the rate of inclusive placements</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the messaging regarding the benefits of inclusive education down to the school level by utilizing the PCNCs and SSCs in the inclusive practices planning process.</li> <li>• Help school teams to be mindful that the included students need the right individualized supports and services to be successful.</li> <li>• Provide specially designed instruction.</li> <li>• Ensure good data collection for decision making.</li> <li>• For students with more significant disabilities, balance placing them in inclusive classrooms for social inclusion while also providing career and technical education to align with their post-school goals.</li> <li>• Have the inclusive practices team attend School Community Council meetings to inform the entire school of data regarding the needs of special education students.</li> </ul> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>increasing parent survey return rates</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporate information about the parent survey into the procedural safeguards notice to increase the awareness about the survey among parents.</li> <li>• Include the survey as part of a facilitator checklist at the IEP.</li> </ul> <p><u>Other discussion points:</u></p> <p>Group members also discussed increasing the rate of parent satisfaction and increasing the rate of return by parents of secondary students. The MAC Branch will be putting together a work group to follow up on improving the survey.</p>
<p><b>Group 4 Report</b></p>	<p>Verna Chinen reported for Group 4 on Preschool LRE (Indicator 6) and Preschool Outcomes (Indicator 7). Preschool environments can be very complicated because OSEP reporting just looks at 3 options, while there are many more options, including serving preschoolers in their national environment. Discussants looked at a Preschool Toolkit to understand the options Hawaii offers. Under Indicator 7, the three outcomes that were examined were acquiring knowledge and skills, social-emotional and appropriate behaviors.</p>

<p><b>Group 4 Report (cont.)</b></p>	<p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>preschool environments</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with parent partners, including SEAC, to make the information in the Tool Kit more understandable to parents in Hawaii.</li> </ul> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>preschool outcomes</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help teachers and parents develop skills around coaching,</li> <li>• Engage more with parents, showing them simple ways to increase language at home in preparation to learn to read.</li> <li>• Work with SEAC partners to get information packets out in various languages.</li> <li>• Be culturally sensitive when reaching out to families.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 5 Report</b></p>	<p>Dr. Heather Chapman reported for Group 5 – Postsecondary Outcomes (Indicator 14). The data for higher education, employment and independent living all improved over the previous SPP/APR. One important discussion point was how the Department is handling the lack of data on students who were not reached by the postsecondary survey.</p> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>postsecondary outcomes</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the topic of transition while students are in elementary school.</li> <li>• Encourage teachers to build relationships and routinely reach out to graduated students to see how they succeeding in postsecondary settings.</li> <li>• Offer alternate diplomas to special education students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Group 6 Report</b></p>	<p>Amy Ruhaak reported for Group 6 – the State Systemic Improvement Plan (Indicator 17). The plan is focused on reading proficiency for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade students in three eligibility categories (SLD, OHD and SoL).</p> <p><u>Improvement strategies for <b>refining the SSIP</b>:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider whether the Smarter Balanced Assessment is the best tool for measuring growth.</li> <li>• Use an assessment or screener in the fall, winter and spring to give a more granular look at growth over time.</li> <li>• Collect longitudinal data to see how the SSIP affects students down the road.</li> <li>• Expand focus beyond the three target eligibility categories (SLD, SoL, OHD) to help students with significant disabilities advance their reading.</li> <li>• Provide effective literacy instruction to teachers.</li> <li>• Explore more ways to involve parents.</li> <li>• Choose an assessment tool that includes a focus on both phonics and reading comprehension.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Feedback on the Discussion Group Reports</b></p>	<p>The following questions and comments were offered by members and guests:</p> <p>Q. One of the improvement strategies for students performing better academically is inclusive education, and yet there seems to be an acknowledgement by the professionals in the room that a resource room might be a better venue. Doesn't that seem to be in conflict with the push for more inclusion? A. The push towards inclusion is so strong that these students are being put in classes where they don't have the baseline skills to address the curriculum. Because the staffing of special education teachers is going towards those inclusion rooms, there is no one to provide a supplemental workshop or a resource room to address the actual needs of the student. Their goals and objectives are tending to be written towards the curriculum instead of based on their actual needs.</p> <p>C. I am really concerned that students with IEPs at the high school level who are in general ed settings are not always getting specially designed instruction (SDI) because of the way the schedule is set up. The general education teacher is teaching the content, and the student may be receiving accommodations, but what they really need is SDI that is aligned with their goals and objectives. In the state office we are looking at how to support schools to be able to work with existing staffing to set up small group instruction and allow for SDI.</p> <p>C. As a parent, I believe we should be placing students in the general ed classroom at a very young age and providing appropriate supports, so that they will learn to read and catch up with their peers. However, when IEP teams talk about supports in the general ed setting, we all struggle to define what those appropriate supports are. Often these supports are not individualized to our child; rather they are what is available. It is possible but very difficult for our children to receive extended school year services after school or during breaks that would help to maintain their skills.</p> <p>Q. Were the improvement strategies for parent involvement limited to the parent survey? A. Yes, we looked at increasing the number of surveys returned, increase the parent satisfaction captured by the surveys, and look incentives to encourage parents of older children to return the survey in greater numbers.</p> <p>Q. Ten or fifteen years ago, Hawaii had more inclusive preschool options. What are we doing to increase inclusive options within the Department? A. That has been a challenge given our law about not opening additional classrooms, so we have been reaching out to Headstart, and we need to work with private partners to bring additional services to the children.</p> <p>C. Parent involvement starts early. If parents are not involved early they won't understand what goes on in elementary and secondary schools.</p> <p>Q. Do we keep data on how many preschoolers don't have an environment to go to? What environments does DOE have besides fully self-contained preschools? Does DOE have any partnerships with private schools? I know of many families who are keeping their child home until Kindergarten due to the lack of appropriate preschool placements.</p> <p>C. Kamehameha Traveling Preschool was a great program, but I don't know if it is still available.</p> <p>C. For many students, we should not be forcing them to choose a diploma track or a certificate route. They may benefit more from a combination of academics and job development.</p>
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<p><b>Feedback on the Discussion Group Reports (cont.)</b></p>	<p><u>Questions/comments from members and guests (cont.)</u>                  C. The Virginia Department of Education has a number of diploma options including an advanced studies diploma, a standard diploma, and an applied studies diploma.                  Q. Have you shared the reading strategies with general education teachers?                  C. When OSEP changed its monitoring requirements to allow states to discontinue reporting on the effectiveness of improvement strategies for all APR indicators and just focus on the State Systemic Improvement Plan, I believe we lost accountability for interventions on students who are older than 4<sup>th</sup> graders.                  C. By only focusing the SSIP on young children, you are losing a whole generation of students. The reading performance of 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders is a poor indication that the early SSIP efforts were effective.                  C. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade proficiency data is for all eligibility groups combined, not the three groups included in the SSIP, so it is not a fair comparison of the effectiveness of SSIP activities.                  C. In the past two years we have developed new improvement strategies for the SSIP including literacy coaches.</p>
<p><b>Closing Thoughts</b></p>	<p>Brikena thanked the participants and acknowledged that the Department is aware that it must improve in order to help students and families experience more success. The point is to learn from our history and work together as we move forward. Martha added that she hopes the feedback provided will be helpful to the Department. Patty Dong chimed in to say that the Powerpoints and Jamboards are available for folks who would like to learn more about some of the other indicators. Roxanne Rokero thanked everyone for their time and thoughtful suggestions. The Department is working together to develop a longitudinal plan over the course of five or more years. Annie Kalama reminded everyone of the strategic planning conversations that are occurring at the Board of Education. She is excited that they are making vulnerable students a priority, and she is looking forward to goal-setting for those students.</p>
<p><b>Input from the Public</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandy Jessmon, a grandparent of a granddaughter receiving special education services, expressed her view that the discussions today were very good, and she hopes the improvement strategies can be implemented. More parents need to better understand what specially designed instruction looks like, and more teachers need to be effective at delivering it. The importance of a good education needs to be emphasized from elementary school all the way up to high school.</li> <li>• Melissa Johnson reported on a lot of families of children with IEPs in crisis because of a lack of supports. The families are getting the run around from school staff, so they are trying to get support from insurance companies who are backlogged with requests for service. Rosie confirmed that Melissa’s complex area on Maui has only two related service providers. Annie Kalama promised to look into the shortage.</li> <li>• Melissa Harper-Osai asked about how to ensure accountability for decisions and actions (or inactions) by school administrators. Her son was recently left behind by the school bus and there has been no accountability to date regarding the contracted transportation provider.</li> </ul>