**SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Minutes – September 8, 2023**

**9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**PRESENT**: Virginia Beringer, Annette Cooper, Mark Disher, Martha Guinan, Mai Hall, Amanda Kaahanui (staff), Helen Kaniho (liaison to the Superintendent), Tina King, Paul Meng, Wendy Nakasone-Kalani, Kau‘i Rezentes, Debora Uyeda, Steven Vannatta, Lisa Vegas, Jasmine Williams, Susan Wood

**EXCUSED**: Sara Alimoot, Melissa Johnson, Jennifer Leoiki-Drino, Kaili Murbach, Susan Rocco (staff)

**ABSENT**: Deborah Cheeseman, Dale Matsuura, Cheryl Matthews, Christopher Pelayo, Deborah Cheeseman, Dale Matsuura, Cheryl Matthews, Christopher Pelayo

**GUESTS**: Michelle Arakawa, Tierney Barcase, Verna Chinen, Patty Dong, Allison Eby, Linda Elento, Angie Graham, Sandy Jessmon, Kapua Pickford, Krista Salon, Leeann Pule Viernes

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TOPIC** | **DISCUSSION/ACTION** |
| **Welcome and Introductions** | Chair Martha Guinan called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. and had members and guests introduce themselves. |
| **Input from the Public** | Shortage of RBTs in schools  Mai Hall brought up the issue of an inadequate supply of Registered Behavioral Technicians (RBTs) to meet students’ IEP needs, especially in Central District. The issue was brought up last year, but it is not clear if the problem was solved. Now that it is a new school year, families are reporting that their child had RBT services in their IEP, but there is no RBT, so the school is using Educational Assistants, and things are falling apart. She asked the Department if they have feedback on when this shortage can be resolved. Helen Kaniho reported that the schools are experiencing shortages in key role groups including special education teachers and educational assistants, speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists and RBTs. All schools can do is to try to hire their own staff, but the Department is experiencing a shortage of behavioral technicians as well. Helen offered to look into specific situations, if Mai could share that information. Mai offered the following suggestions based on conversations she has had with contracted RBTs: 1) strengthen the contracts with the various providers, and/or 2) make them employees of the Department with benefits. If we are looking for consistency for our children, we need these professionals to be paid what they are worth, so they stay in their jobs and don’t leave the system to work for Target. This is a systemic problem where just hiring more bodies is not going to create a stable supply of RBTs. The answer is adequate pay and benefits for these individuals. Helen replied that the Department is trying everything, including sign on bonuses and differentials, and ultimately want to have employee-based RBTs. Amanda Kaahanui shared that many good people are |

SEAC Minutes

September 8, 2023

Page 2

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Input from the Public (cont.)** | Shortage of RBTs in schools (cont.)  lost to the system because they can’t get adequate health insurance or full-time employment. Her son had several communication aides who were hired for only 19 hours a week. Not only did her son lose out on consistent support, because the two aides who covered weekly support needs did not have time to communicate with each other, but several left to take a job at Costco because they offered full time work with benefits.  Bell schedule results in a loss IEP support minutes  A grandmother reported that the school that her granddaughter attends changed their bell schedule resulting in a loss of 100 minutes of support in her granddaughter’s IEP. She heard from another parent that when her child’s IEP minutes were affected by the bell schedule, her IEP team offered to reconvene and restore the minutes. Helen responded by saying teams should not be writing IEP minutes to fit in with the bell schedule. There might be a different issue at that school that needs to be addressed. She invited the grandparent to share the name of the school, so that she can follow-up with the District Educational Specialist. |
| **Announcements** | 1. Amanda announced that the Footsteps to Transition Fair on Oahu is scheduled for February 3rd. Interested persons can read and share the Save the Date flyer and visit https:/footstepstotransition.weebly.com to register and to access transition information. 2. Martha reminded members that the next SEAC meeting in on October 20th, the third Friday, due to Fall Break. 3. Tina King announced that Leadership in Disabilities and Achievement in Hawaii is holding its Traveling Mini Conference in Hilo this weekend at Waiakea High School from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm. On September 30th, they will be holding a Kona conference from 9:00-1:00. Openings are still open for vendors in Kona. Please call Tina for more information. 4. Helen Kaniho let people know that the Early Childhood Conference on October 12 and 13 is open to SEAC members. For more information, go to: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vEaDKa8b36QdDljaHauL59Y0RBTb-BQ_/view?usp=sharing>. |
| **Maui Updates** | Links to information and resources  Helen shared the links for the Hawaii Public Schools, West Maui resources. Within those links are counseling services for students and staff in-person, school-based or by phone. A big issue is preparing to re-open schools—Lahainaluna High, Lahaina Inter and Princess Nahi‘ena‘ena—after Fall Break. In addition, displaced families are welcomed to register wherever they are living. A bus service |

SEAC Minutes

September 8, 2023

Page 3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Maui Updates (cont.)** | started for the Lahaina students who are temporarily being assigned to Kamali‘i Elementary, Wailuku Elementary and Lokelani Intermediate. The new high school, Kulanihako‘i High, is offering a school-within-a-school model for Lahainaluna High students. The tentative start date is dependent on returning as safely as possible. In the meantime, the Department is planning learning hubs in West Maui.  Parent infographics  Amanda Kaahanui reported that FEMA approached SPIN to create a [flyer](http://spinhawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Support-for-Maui.pdf) they could hand out to West Maui families of students with disabilities who are affected by the wildfires. The flyer contains simple contact information for various needs. In addition, the Department of Education asked if SPIN could convert a four-page guide on How Parents Can Support Their Grieving Child into a [one-page infographic](http://spinhawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/How-Parents-Support-Grieving-Children.pdf).  Questions/comments from members and guests  Q. Are any of the children from the Lahainaluna Complex currently staying past Lahaina West? They too would need to go to Wailuku for school? A. That is an option with bussing services. The Department is looking to create learning hubs for families who do not want their children to travel that far.  Q. If we are utilizing hotels, is it possible to use the hotel space to create a learning center for families living in these hotels? A. (Martha) I know that the Department is trying to think creatively. (Helen) These are the options now, and we will let our Parent Partner group know when there are more options.  C. Many of the families are traumatized and don’t want to make a choice between having their child educated and keeping them safe with them.  Q. It appears that there are still about 100 students that are unaccounted for. Have you heard how many of these children might have !EPs and need services? A. I know that the Department is trying to reach all students, and I don’t have a number for that group of students.  Q. Are we trying to ascertain whether the Department has an appropriate needs assessment to know the potential number of students who may be in need but not yet contacted? A. We have been working closely with our Maui District Education Specialists on students with IEPs and 504 Plans. They have identified the students who may have more intensive needs.  C. I am concerned about students who may need specialized equipment, like a wheelchair, who may need a replacement. Is there anything that SEAC can do to help? Please keep us informed. |

SEAC Minutes

September 8, 2023

Page 4

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Maui Updates (cont.)** | C. I have lots of ohana on Maui. I’m glad SPIN made that flyer to direct parents toward services. Is the flyer going to go up on the DOE website, because I’m talking to families who have looked on the website for someplace to call and don’t see anything. Families may need durable medical equipment, visual schedules, etc. but they don’t know where to go to get them. Q. Is it a priority of the Department to replace these lost supports immediately?  Q. I am wondering how the lost time will be made up to students. Will the school year be extended, or will more families have access to ESY services? A. When there is a crisis and students return to learn, we want to have an assessment of what their needs are to make up for lost instruction.  C. If you are going to require families of children who need specialized instruction to go to an IEP meeting and see if you have data to show regression, that is nonsense to me. The families are stressed out and just need support for their kids. Some children will lose out because their families won’t be able to go through that process and fight for services.  C. I’m a parent and know parents who work and can’t do meetings and therefore their student with an IEP didn’t review or receive or be offered any covid impact or ESY services.  C. Yes, we need guidance on compensatory services like when we had Covid Impact Services, and parents need to know how to ask for that.  C. At a minimum, there should at least be compensatory time that is automatically given. |
| **Inclusive Practices and SEAC Priorities** | Steven Vannatta reminded members of the process of selecting priorities for SEAC attention and problem solving during the August meeting. Now the SEAC Leadership team is asking members for their assistance in fleshing out these broad priorities to identify which aspects of each issue are most important to explore. This will help ensure that the relevant experts will be present at meetings help SEAC delve into these issues with an eye to furthering our understanding and making recommendations to the Department. The top priorities included Pre-k and school age inclusion, secondary transition, bullying and dispute resolution. Helen offered her observation that all the buckets SEAC selected for this school year fall under the umbrella of inclusive practices and healthy systems of support for all. For dispute resolution, as an example, we want to examine whether we are being inclusive in our conflict resolution practices.  Member input via a whiteboard  Amanda provided a quick tutorial on how to use annotation tools in Zoom to write ideas on the shared whiteboard. Members were also invited to use the Chat feature or voice their concerns so that Amanda can include their feedback. The SEAC members offered their ideas as summarized in: |

SEAC Minutes

September 8, 2023

Page 5

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Inclusive Practices and SEAC Priorities (cont.)** | Member input via a whiteboard (cont.)  [Attachment A: SEAC member Feedback on Priority Buckets for School Year 2023-24](http://seac-hawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SEAC-MEMBER-FEEDBACK-ON-PRIORITY-BUCKETS.docx).  Inclusion Activity  Members and guests were invited to share their thoughts on four questions related to inclusive education as a prelude to the overview on inclusion that follows this activity. This feedback is summarized in [Attachment B: SEAC Member Feedback on Inclusion Questions](http://seac-hawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SEAC-Member-Responses-to-Inclusion-Questions.docx). |
| **Overview of Inclusive Practices** | Krysta Salon, an educational specialist on inclusion from the Office of Student Support Services, offered members an overview of inclusive practices. She expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to share information with SEAC and for the thoughtful answers to the four inclusion questions posed in the previous activity. She explained that the main objective for her presentation is to identify the difference between *inclusion* and *inclusive practices*. She began her presentation by describing the unique needs of her siblings, parents, grandparents and spouse—her “why” for being passionate about promoting inclusive supports for students—and invited members to ground themselves with their own “why.”  Inclusive education  Krysta shared the following definition of inclusive education which sums up the direction that the Office of Student Support Services is promoting for all students: “Inclusive education means every student is valued because of their strengths, gifts, and even challenges. As disability is simply…diversity. Everyone benefits from meaningful participation and opportunities to learn grade level content with diverse peers. We must trust that all students come to us as incredible whole people who do not need to be fixed.”  Inclusive practices  Inclusive practices are about equity, valuing diversity, and supporting students in their learning while acknowledging their unique gifts and strengths. They are policies, procedures and systems of evidence-based academic and behavioral supports—strong tier one instruction—that benefit all learners.  IDEA focus on LRE  The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act emphasizes that students with disabilities should be educated with non-disabled children to the maximum extent appropriate and that these students only be removed to special classes or separate schooling when it is apparent that educating the students in |

SEAC Minutes

September 8, 2023

Page 6

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Overview of Inclusive Practices (cont.)** | IDEA focus on LRE (cont.)  the general education classroom with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.  Recent history in improving access to inclusive education  In 2016 Hawaii ranked last in the nation in including students with disabilities in the general education classroom for 80% or more of the school day. This issue became a focus of the Special Education Task Force, resulting in a contract with Stetson & Associates. Over the last 6-7 years, Hawaii has moved from educating on 36.9% of special education students in the general education classroom for most or all of the school day to 52.77% in 2023. Despite these gains, there is still a lot of work to do to improve access, given that the national average is over 66%. Part of the work ahead is to challenge the existing assumption that inclusion is only represented by one model, when in fact, we need to offer the continuum of supports.  Inclusive practices goals  These goals are 1) to close the achievement gap for students with disabilities, and 2) increase the time that students with disabilities spend in the general education classroom. A critical component of success is the provision of supplementary aids and services.  Shifting from pull-out to in-class support  Traditionally, if students with disabilities needed extra support, they were pulled out to a resource room or self-contained classroom. The current shift in thinking is represented in the table below:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | OLD | NEW | | Program & label-driven places | Strong Tier 1 instruction | | Ratios and numbers | Individually determined services & support | | Alternative & supplemental curricula | The general education curriculum | | Remedial approach | Accelerated approach | | Physically & socially isolated | Included as members of the school | |  | Staffing determined by student needs |   The current LRE Continuum  Supports range from Tier I supports in the general education classroom (available to all students) **to** advance supports (note-taking, adjusting the reading level of texts, reading aloud to the student, etc.) **to** in-class supports (peer support, paraeducators, teachers, related services **to** specialized support. |

SEAC Minutes

September 8, 2023

Page 7

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Overview of Inclusive Practices (cont.)** | Keys to success  **The first key is relationships**. We encourage schools to have staff work out their partnerships between special education and general education personnel prior to the beginning of the school year. We also talk to teachers, educational assistants and related services personnel regarding six approaches to in-class support. Our three high-yield approaches are parallel teaching, alternative teaching and station teaching, because these reduce the student: teacher ratio and allow a quicker response to a student’s needs. **A second key to success is student supports**. These include accommodations and modifications. Any student can receive an accommodation (small “a”) to create an equal opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, but they become Accommodations (big “A”) when an IEP team determines that a student needs a specific accommodation to access or have benefit from the general education curriculum. Modifications are only reserved for those students with IEPs who require a change in what they are expected to learn or demonstrate. Other student supports include flexible grouping and engagement. **The third key to success is collaborative planning.** Teachers and other staff must have time to plan, and we give them examples of who to do it.  Additional resources  Krysta provided members and guests with an [Inclusive Practices Overview](http://seac-hawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/SEACIPHandout.pdf) that includes types of accommodations, a classroom accommodations checklist, an Area of Difficulty checklist and online resources.  Questions/comments from members and guests  C. Thank you for sharing about your family. What amazing odds, experiences and successes. I am hoping these inclusion concepts/efforts will be embraced by school teams working to support students. There has been progress, but it needs to continue.  C. I think the way that you have laid out the components of inclusive practices is great, but sitting in IEP meetings for my own sons or for other student’s families it translates a little different. It may be because every school is interpreting the concepts their own way. For example, when discussing present levels of performance, there are always disagreements with what the parent perceives as their child’s needs. The team then responds by offering to put the parent’s perceived need in the parent concern section rather than offering to write a goal based on the PLEP. A. Every school is at their own level of understanding. We are trying to reiterate these practices, and if we know where this is occurring, we can follow up. The other problem is staff turnover, so we are trying to create sustainable systems on campuses where schools will train new personnel.  Q. What do we do about schools who say, “we don’t do this here?” A. There is a continuum of thoughts, |

SEAC Minutes

September 8, 2023

Page 8

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Overview of Inclusive Practices (cont.)** | Questions/comments from members and guests (cont.)  understanding and beliefs, but if we know about it, we can tackle it.  C. I am pleased to relate that all of the state and complex area staff got training in what you were just addressing. I would encourage parents to let their district education specialist for special education know, if they encounter a problem at a school, so that they can follow-up.  C. What we are hearing from parents whose children are just entering kindergarten is that they have no understanding that there are district supports or even supports at the complex area. It would be really helpful to find a way to provide that information to families just coming into the system. A. That’s helpful advice. It is probably also a problem for families coming from out of state.  C. A lot of the tools in the Inclusive Practices Overview are part of Universal Design for Learning (UDL). So many educators do not understand UDL. Is this a mandated training to help them understand how to use UDL in the classroom?  Q. What can parents do when the district is perpetuating the same message about not offering inclusion? A. We should be in the position where schools can move past that negative response, because have lots of tools and processes. Sometimes we find out that schools are not utilizing these tools or their personnel correctly, so it is helpful if you let us know where these barriers are occurring so that we can try to intervene.  Q. We know that Stetson was here and set up the training with the cohorts on a voluntary basis. Now training is done by the Department, and where are we with ensuring that every school gets the training? A. We have the expectation that all schools will support inclusion and we have very strong complex area teams to support all schools. We continue to monitor and look at data.  Q. When you are evaluating the inclusion rate, are you also looking at the discipline rate, because sometimes kids are placed in inclusion classes when they aren’t ready for it? Behavior sometimes escalates and they may get kicked out or avoid class. A. One of the things we find is that academics can have a direct impact on behavior. If kids are struggling to access learning, they can act out, so we try to preventatively ensure access to learning.  C. In high school students who might be on a certificate track are often denied access to a general education class because they are not accumulating credits for a diploma. This is denying them the right to be included with their same age peers. A. There are lots of benefits that comes with inclusion that are not strictly academic, so we do encourage schools to provide access.  C. Inclusive practices are processes, and it is not one size fits all. So, if we have kids earning credits in one class and not in another, that’s okay. |

SEAC Minutes

September 8, 2023

Page 9

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Review of the Minutes for August 12, 2023** | The August SEAC meeting minutes are not available for review at this time, so they will be taken up at the October meeting. |
| **Agenda Setting for the October 20, 2023 Meeting** | Members suggested the following agenda items for discussion in October:   * Update on the Dispute Resolution Strategic Plan * New preschool initiatives * Model school programs related to inclusion and secondary transition * Infographic work, and * Discussion of the comments regarding the four SEAC priorities. |
| **Infographic and Video Work Groups** | Positions and Interests video  Steven reviewed progress toward creating a SEAC video explaining the negotiation tool of exploring the interests related to the positions taken by parents and schools in order to find some common understandings. Last month the group viewed a video by Comms Lab that discussed positions and interests with humor and simplicity. The current goal is to produce a local video targeted toward special education stakeholders that incorporate some of the qualities of the Comms Lab video. Steven asked if anyone would like to join the present work group consisting of Amanda, Lisa, Tina, Susan W. and Steven. Helen volunteered herself and Jasmine. Next step would be to watch the CADRE video on positions and interests. Most work group meetings will be virtual, but the November meeting will offer the opportunity of meeting in person. Then the group can outline SEAC’s video project. Susan W. suggested having members view the CADRE video together prior to the October meeting. Martha clarified that no specialized skills are needed to join the group.  Pending work on infographics  Amanda opened the member portal to view the current “to do” list, and there are only a few outstanding tasks including finalizing the dialogue guide for the *Diploma vs. Certificate* 2-part infographic and exploring companion infographics for private school students who may need to transition to public school. She encouraged folks to look for 2-3 new infographics around our priority buckets. Suggestions included 1) a timeline for families/schools to know when to start preparing/planning for postsecondary living, 2) solutions to common challenges/barriers to inclusion, and 3) responding to bullying and bullying prevention. Amanda and Martha encouraged members to visit [SPIN’s infographic menu tab](https://spinhawaii.org/infographics/) to see what has already been done and what might be needed. |