**Special Education Advisory Council**

**November 8, 2024 Meeting**

**Minutes**

**PRESENT:** Kathie Awaya, Virginia Beringer, Will Carlson, Annette Cooper, Mark Disher, Nancy Gorman (for Paul Meng), Martha Guinan, Mai Hall, Amanda Kaahanui (staff), Tina King, Dale Matsuura, Cheryl Matthews, Trish Moniz, Wendy Nakasone-Kalani, Chris Pelayo, Susan Rocco (staff), Scott Shimabukuro, Herbert Taitingfong, Steven Vannatta, Lisa Vegas, Tracy Villanueva (for Siena Molina), Jasmine Williams
**EXCUSED:** Kupu Kaniho, Susan Wood
**ABSENT**: Melissa Johnson, Kiele Pennington, Kaui Rezentes, Rosie Rowe
**GUESTS**: Andrea Alexander, Sara Alimoot, Jaclyn Caffrey, Verna Chinen, Kaui Correa, Jamia Green, Sandy Jessmon, Christine Montague-Hicks, Michael McGushin, Lori Morimoto, Amy Ruhaak, Molly Takagi, Brikena White, Jacy Yamamoto

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| **TOPIC** | **DISCUSSION/ACTION** |
| **Call to Order/ Welcome/Introductions** | Chair Martha Guinan opened the meeting at 9:05 a.m. and read Sunshine Law requirements for testimony. Members and guests introduced themselves and the office or stakeholder group they are representing. |
| **Input from the Public** | Amanda Kaahanui made SEAC aware that SPIN has been hearing from more and more families of preschool families that say their children’s IEP minutes are being cut. It has been determined that the children only require 2 hours of Specially designed instruction. The families are now scrambling to find coverage for their children for the rest of the day.  |
| **Announcements** | Susan Rocco announced that Leadership in Disabilities and Achievement of Hawaii (LDAH) is having their Traveling Mini-Conference on Oahu tomorrow (November 9th) at Tokai University in Kapolei from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.Will Carlson announced that Molokai Complex hosted a very well received Traveling Mini- Conference on October 16th. He also reported that the Molokai Community Children’s Council has possibly found a new co-chair.Verna Chinen added that DOE has been accompanying the LDAH Traveling Mini-Conferences, and their presence has been well received with both parents and students coming to visit the Exceptional Support Branch table.Tina King announced that Special Olympics Young Athletes is holding an event for children aged 2 through 7 with and without disabilities on December 7th from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. at the Special Olympics Office in Ewa. The event will offer Hawaiian games and free vision, hearing, developmental and wellness screenings. Parents are asked to register as soon as possible to allow organizers time to order tee-shirts for the youth.  |

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| **Preparing for the SPP/APR Engagement Meeting on Dec. 3rd** | Brikena White shared the agenda of the upcoming State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report Educational/Community Partner Engagement Meeting sponsored by the Department of Education with support from SEAC. (See Attachment A). The meeting will be held in person at the Japanese Cultural Center and on Zoom. Invitations will be sent out within the next few days.Breakout discussion groupsThe process for breakouts will be to 1) review goal and measurement, 2) review performance and targets from the baseline in 2020 to the present, 3) determine if targets need to be reset, 4) discuss barriers that are contributing to performance issues, and 5) discuss activities/strategies/practices making a positive difference or negative impact. SEAC leadership has also developed a list of Dialogue Guiding Questions (Attachment B) to elicit meaningful feedback during the group discussions. Participants will have an opportunity to react to the data and provide input on both barriers and strategies for improvement.Registration and support for participantsMembers were given a link to a registration form for the meeting where they can indicate a preference for discussion groups. The Monitoring and Compliance Branch is offering reimbursements for airfare and ground transportation to neighbor island parents who want to attend in person.  |
| **Reframing School Attendance: Focusing on Regular Attendance vs. Chronic Absenteeism** | Steven Vannatta made a brief presentation with a focus on regular school attendance as opposed to a focus on chronic absenteeism following a national trend. Historically, chronic absenteeism became part of the Strive HI accountability system in 2013 and was a student success indicator. It was defined as missing 15 or more days during the school year. Prior to the pandemic, the average chronic absenteeism rate for students with IEPs was about 24% vs. 14% for the total student population. The special education rate rose to a high of 48.9% in SY 21-22 and came down to 35.3% last school year.Shift to Regular AttendanceThe 2023-2029 strategic plan has replaced chronic absenteeism with a measurement of regular attendance--attending school 90% or more of the school year which equates to missing 17 or fewer instructional days. The lowest rate of regular attendance for students with IEPs (54%) occurred in SY 21-22. By SY 23-24 the rate had risen to 65%.Attendance risk factors for students with IEPsRisk factors include out-of-school suspensions, bullying, chronic health conditions like asthma, and mental health challenges.Impact of chronic absenteeism (including excused and unexcused absences)Students who regularly miss out on instruction also miss out on opportunities for rewarding activities at  |

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| **Reframing School Attendance: Focusing on Regular Attendance vs. Chronic Absenteeism****(cont.)** | Impact of chronic absenteeism (including excused and unexcused absences) cont.school and face higher risks for poor academic performance, lower graduation rates, higher dropout rates and lower lifetime earnings.Root causes for absenteeismSteven reviewed a framework for discussing chronic absenteeism from Attendance Works, a national non-profit that provides education and tools to address absenteeism. Their research has categorized chronic absenteeism into four main areas: barriers, aversion, disengagement, and misconceptions.Small group discussionsMembers and guests were divided into five small groups to answer the following questions:1. 1. What challenges do families and students with disabilities face regarding attendance?
2. 2. What solutions do you feel would support increased attendance?

The discussions are summarized in Attachment C. |
| **Timely Initial Evaluations: Indicator 11** | Brikena and Lori Morimoto shared the latest data on the percentage of initial evaluations completed within 60 calendar days of receiving parental consent. Chapter 60 goes beyond IDEA in also requiring that an eligibility meeting be held within that 60-day timeline to share the team’s determination. The target and goal of Indicator 11 is to achieve 100% compliance to ensure students receive supports in a timely manner. If a school does not complete all initial evaluations within the timeline, the Monitoring and Compliance (MAC) Branch issues a finding of noncompliance. Starting this school year (SY 24-25), MAC will meet with schools to conduct a root cause analysis of the reasons for delay and develop an action plan for improvement. Local data and national comparisonsHawaii’s SY 22-23 data was at 96% compliance, while SY 23-24 preliminary data is at 95% compliance. Brik also shared national data from SY 20-21 (the most recent year comparison data is available) where Hawaii was at 96.56%--about in the median of all states. However, not all state data is strictly comparable. Some of the states only focus their timeline on when the evaluation was completed—not when the eligibility meeting was conducted and results shared with parents.Reasons for exceeding the 60-day timelineIn SY 23-24 out of about 4900 student initial evaluations, 244 were overdue. 71% of the delays were caused by the parent not being available to attend eligibility meeting (45%) or the parent requesting to delay the eligibility conference (26%). The remaining 29% of delays were caused by a delay in the assessment, a provider not being available, or the provider’s report not being available |

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| **Timely Initial Evaluations: Indicator 11 (cont.)** | Small group discussionsMembers and guests were divided into five groups to answer the following questions:1. What challenges do families have in attending the eligibility meeting?
2. What can schools do to engage and accommodate parents in the evaluation process?
3. How can schools and the state office support families with sharing the importance of attending these meetings in a timely manner?

The discussions are summarized in Attachment D.  |
| **Feedback from the Hawaii Statewide Alternate Assessment (HSA-Alt) Stakeholder Meeting**  | Trish Moniz attended the stakeholder meeting with Martha. She was happy to meet the staff who contributed to the data and assessment development. There was representation from many different sectors involved in the discussions and the current assessment, which is based on the Common Core Standards, looks very promising. Training of staff on how to administer the test will begin in time for students to take the test in the Spring. Martha added that this assessment is for 1% of all students or roughly 10% of special education students. |
| **Review of the Minutes for the October 18, 2024 Meeting**  | No additions or corrections were made to the draft minutes.**Action: The minutes were approved as circulated.** |
| **Agenda Setting for the December 13, 2024 Meeting** | Members offered the following items for consideration of inclusion in the December 13th agenda:* Feedback from the SPP/APR Engagement Meeting
* A summary of the small group discussions on **regular attendance** and **timely initial evaluations**
* Comparison of Diploma/GED/Certificate of Completion by the Exceptional Support Branch (ESB)
* Alternatives to Suspension (ESB)
* Data and reasons for Dropouts/4140s (ESB)
* Staffing issues/parent training (ESB)
* Small group discussions
* Infographic work.

The SEAC leadership team will work to secure speakers for any of the above topics. |
| **Update on SEAC Video on Positions vs. Interests** | Steven Vannatta reported that while the video itself is still in process, the script has been finalized and is available for viewing by members via the SEAC member portal on the website: <https://seac-hawaii.org>. The next step is to put together a sample of the video using the Create Studio software that was purchased for this purpose. |

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| **Formation of New Infographic Work Groups** | Amanda reminded members of a previous selection of new infographics around the following topics: **IEP Transition Page, Work-based Learning, Initial Evaluation Timeline** and **Pro Se Due Process Hearings.** Other possible topics suggested by members**Early Intervention:** Mai Hall shared that she is interested in developing some infographics for early intervention based on some materials she developed when working for the Maryland Parent Training and Information (PTI) program. Two tentative topics include acronyms used in early intervention and the transition from Part C to Part B. Currently there are not many infographics on early intervention on the SPIN or LDAH websites, and she would like to fill that information gap. Amanda shared that SPIN does have one infographic on the transition to HIDOE preschool, and there is also a video presentation on the early intervention process on the spinconference.org website. Susan R. brought up a related project of Parent Partners (with representation from the Exceptional Support Branch, the Monitoring and Compliance Branch, SPIN, LDAH, SEAC, DD Council, Hilopaa and the Community Children’s Councils) for families of children 3 and older who are going through an initial evaluation to determine eligibility for special education. One of the project tasks is to develop a series of infographics describing each of the 14 eligibility categories. **Transition from Middle to High School:** Trish Moniz asked if there is an existing infographic for students moving from middle to high school programming. Susan R. pointed out the SEAC infographic on certificate vs. diploma that Lisa Vegas helped to produced. **Special Education Funding:** Herbert Taitingfong asked if there is an infographic explaining the funding for special education from the federal government and the state. He would like to know what agencies are contributing the dollars, how much money is allocated to the schools, what programs are being funded. Once the moneys are conveyed to the school, the principal decided where to spend the money. Cheryl Matthews agreed added that it is important to determine the commitment of the principal in allocating the funds. They develop the budget and need more training on how to proactively support students with IEPs. Herbert is concerned that money targeted for special education students is taken for building projects that don’t benefit the students with the IEPs, and there are not currently enough meaningful programs for the student beyond raking leaves, collecting bottles, etc. Susan R. pointed out that there is a separate budget for capital improvements like new construction and school maintenance. In regard to special education funding, Jasmine Williams saw a publication of the USDOE that said that $412 million was given to Hawaii to address the impact of COVID on students, and $184 million was given to support students with  |

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| **Formation of New Infographic Work Groups (cont.)** | **Special Education Funding (cont.):** disabilities. Jasmine would like to know where this money has been spent and how it benefited students with disabilities. Martha mentioned that we are trying to schedule Brian Hallett, the Chief Financial Officer of DOE, to come to SEAC in January or February, and he would be able to backtrack where this money was spent. Susan R. added that the Board of Education also discussed where the moneys were intended to be spent, including on summer programming and nursing.Selection of infographic work groups:Martha deferred discussion of Pro Se Due Process, because Melissa Johnson and other members with experience in this topic are absent today. She asked members and guests to indicate their current interest in one the three work groups below:**IEP Transition Page**: Kathie Awaya, Annette Cooper, Jasmine Williams, Lisa Vegas, Mai Hall, Mark Disher**Work-Based Learning**: Martha Guinan, Herbert Taitingfong, Cheryl Matthews, Sandy Jessmon, Trish Moniz**Initial Evaluation Timeline**: Chris Pelayo, Dale Matsuura, Kaui Correa, Nancy Gorman, Susan Rocco, Tracie Villanueva, Wendy Nakasone-Kalani, Will Carlson |