HAWAIʻI STATE

Department of Education

Student Achievement and Literacy for Students with Disabilities

Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) Meeting
October 16, 2026

Helen “Kupu” Kaniho, State Director of Special Education
Nicole Schmitz, Educational Specialist, Office of Student Support Services, ESB
Verna Chinen, Administrator, Office of Student Support Services, ESB


Nā Hopena Aʻo Statements
HĀ: BREATH
Strengthened Sense of Belonging
He pili wehena ʻole *
(A relationship that cannot be undone)
Kūpaʻa au i koʻu wahi no ka pono o ka ʻohana, ke kaiaulu, ka ʻāina a me ka honua nei.
Strengthened Sense of Responsibility
Ma ka hana ka ʻike, ma ka ʻimi ka loaʻa *
(In working one learns, through initiative one acquires)
ʻAuamo au i koʻu kuleana no ka hoʻokō pono ʻana i ia kuleana mai ka mua a ka hope.
Strengthened Sense of Hawaiʻi
ʻO Hawaiʻi kuʻu ʻāina kilohana *
(Hawai'i is my prized place)
Hōʻike au i ke aloha a me ka mahalo no koʻu ʻāina kilohana ʻo Hawaiʻi nei.
HĀ–BREATH
Nā Hopena Aʻo
Strengthened Sense of Total Well-being
Ua ola loko i ke aloha *
(Love is imperative to one's mental and physical welfare)
Me ke aloha au e mālama ai i ka noʻonoʻo, ka naʻau, ke kino a me ka pilina ʻuhane i pono koʻu ola.
Strengthened Sense of Excellence
ʻAʻohe ʻulu e loaʻa i ka pōkole o ka lou *
(There is no success without preparation)
Noke au ma ke ala kūpono e hiki aku ai au i koʻu kūlana poʻokela iho nō.
Strengthened Sense of Aloha
E ʻōpū aliʻi *
(Have the heart of a chief)
Me ke aloha au e hana ai i ʻili nā hopena maikaʻi ma luna oʻu, o ka ʻohana, ke kaiāulu, koʻu ʻāina a me ka honua nei.
* Source: Pukui, M. (1983). ʻŌlelo Noʻeau Hawaiian Proverbs & Poetical Sayings. Honolulu, Hawaii: Bishop Museum Press.

Vision of a Hawaii Public School Graduate

The Hawaiʻi State Department of Education, together with families and communities, envisions every graduate as a lifelong learner who is globally competitive and locally committed. Graduates will:

- Apply academic knowledge and an innovative mindset to think critically, communicate effectively, and create impactful contributions in the pursuit of excellence.
- Be resilient and adaptable to an ever changing world. Graduates will take initiative in charting their next steps to advance their life journey—such as in postsecondary education, career, enterprise, service or exploration.
- Cultivate well-being and compassion, care for self and others, and build deep roots in Hawaiʻi to fulfill their kuleana and strengthen their community.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN Priority I: High Quality Learning For All

Special Education Levers

Goal 1.1

All students experience rigorous, high-quality learning that results in equitable outcomes for all learners.

Goal 1.2

All students learn in a safe, nurturing, and culturally responsive environment.

Lever 1: Evidence-based Interventions & Practices; Specially Designed Instruction based on data from each student on an IEP (Data Based Individualization)

Lever 2: Training and Coaching, Targeted Professional Capacity Building

Lever 4: Actionable Data Practices (using data to guide instruction and interventions)

Lever 3: Universal Access to High Leverage Instruction, Access to Core Curriculum

Lever 6: Integrated Family and Community Partnerships, Family Collaboration and Learning

Lever 5: Safe, Supportive and Accessible Learning Environments

Desired Outcome

All student groups perform equally well academically and show continued academic growth, irrespective of background and circumstances.

Desired Outcome

All students desire to and attend school regularly.

Today's Objectives

- Overview of the CLSD Grant and Act 234 and their support for students with dyslexia and language and literacy challenges
- Update on Special Education initiatives for literacy: Intensive Intervention for Language and Foundational Reading; Viable Curriculum for Intensive Academic Needs (TeachTown); Braille literacy; and Bilingual Grammar/Fairview Learning (Deaf literacy)
- Developing a Framework for Non-Mandated Transition Planning from Middle School to High School

SSIP Indicator 17 Requires a Comprehensive Plan to Improve Educational Results

> *"The State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) is a federal reporting requirement under OSEP's Indicator 17. It serves as a comprehensive, ambitious, and achievable multi-year plan designed to improve educational results for children with disabilities."*



Statewide Alignment

By aligning statewide infrastructure, technical assistance, and professional development, the SSIP ensures that targeted literacy interventions translate into measurable improvements in student outcomes.



Rigorous Framework

The SSIP framework requires HIDOE to conduct rigorous data analysis, implement coherent, evidence-based improvement strategies, and continuously evaluate progress.

SSIP Indicator 17 Requires a Comprehensive Plan to Improve Educational Results

"The State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) is a federal reporting requirement under OSEP's Indicator 17. It serves as a comprehensive, ambitious, and achievable multi-year plan designed to improve educational results for children with disabilities."

Statewide Alignment

By aligning statewide infrastructure, technical assistance, and professional development, the SSIP ensures that targeted literacy interventions translate into measurable improvements in student outcomes.

Rigorous Framework

The SSIP framework requires HIDOE to conduct rigorous data analysis, implement coherent, evidence-based improvement strategies, and continuously evaluate progress.

Literacy Initiatives

TeachTown Launch for PreK

(Comprehensive Early Childhood Curriculum)



Launched in School Year 2025–2026

A comprehensive, inclusive early childhood curriculum with whole-group, small-group, and individualized instructing in language, literacy, social-emotional learning, and more.

TeachTown

(Core Curriculum for Students with Intensive Support Needs)



Initiative

Specialized educational software and curriculum designed for students with moderate to severe disabilities, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and intellectual disabilities. Rooted in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), it provides K–12 adapted core curricula, social-emotional learning, and transition planning.

Intensive Intervention for Word Recognition

(Literacy Initiatives for Students with Mild to Moderate Support Needs)



Launched in School Year 2025–2026

Targets the root causes of reading challenges by strengthening phonological awareness, decoding, and word recognition through systematic, evidence-based reading intervention.

University Reading Intervention Specialist Program

(Literacy Initiatives for Students with Mild to Moderate Support Needs)



Launched in School Year 2022–2023

In partnership with the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, this 19-credit program prepares specialists in evidence-based reading instruction and dyslexia practices. Accredited by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA).

Literacy Initiatives Continued

Braille Literacy

Braille Literacy Education Act (implementation)

- Include the instruction of Braille and provision of Braille instructional materials
- Cooperate with DHS when data requested to maintain register of Blind in the state
- Provide comprehensive information about Braille literacy services, AT, AT services

Bilingual Grammar & Fairview Learning

Fairview Learning

Fairview-intervention strategies applied to reading curriculum

Language Bridge

ASL as the bridge to English

Teachtown Launch and enCORE Workshops and Coaching Dates



Completed Statewide Teachtown PD

BOY In-Person Workshop
Refresher for return facilitators

enCORE
- 1 - Kauai
- 5 - Oahu
- 1 - Maui
- 2 - Hawaii

Launch
- 3 - Oahu
- 1 - Maui

101 In-Person Workshop
For new facilitators

enCORE
- 1 - Kauai
- 5 - Oahu
- 1 - Maui
- 2 - Hawaii

Launch
- 4 - Oahu
- 1 - Maui

Virtual Workshops
Online training sessions

enCORE
- 1 - Oahu
- 1 - Hawaii

Launch
- 1 - Maui
- 2 - Hawaii

In-Class Coaching has started

Intensive Intervention for Language and Foundational Literacy is Designed to Support Students PreK-12

Assessment

Using assessment to identify the root cause of reading problems, administering, scoring and interpreting assessments.

Goal Setting and Monitoring

Effectively using rate of improvement formulas to set goals for foundational literacy, and monitoring student growth over time

Intervention for Language

Instructional strategies to support the language development of students in preschool and kindergarten

Intervention for Foundational Literacy

Instructional strategies to support foundational reading skills for students in kindergarten through 12th grade.

Literacy Nites!



Pre-K Through Transition Age

FAMILY LITERACY PASSPORT

Literacy is Access
2026–27 Virtual Learning Series

Literacy Nites!
530-630pm

Nov 18, 2026 — Literacy Is Access: Same goal. Different paths.
Dec 16, 2026 — Literacy in My World: Literacy is everywhere.
Jan 20, 2027 — Choose Your Literacy: Choice increases engagement.
Feb 17, 2027 — Read It. Do It.: Literacy helps us do things.
Mar 24, 2027 — Everyone Has a Voice: Communication is access.
Apr 21, 2027 — Find What Works: Tools can increase access.
May 19, 2027 — Literacy for My Future: Literacy supports independence.
Jun 16, 2027 — Our Literacy Stories: Everyone has a literacy story.

Breakout Activity

Developing a Framework for Non-Mandated Transition Planning

Helping students with disabilities experience a coordinated, supported transition to high school.



Middle School / Intermediate School → High School

What are we trying to accomplish?

By the end of this session, we will:

- Identify barriers and support needs experienced by students with disabilities transitioning to high school.
- Examine practices that could guide a proactive, non-mandated transition framework.
- Gather stakeholder feedback on resources, processes, and collaboration needed across middle and high schools.
- Prioritize recommendations for developing a practical, sustainable framework.

Reflect and Connect

Think of a student who experienced a smooth or challenging transition from middle school to high school. Focus on the conditions, supports, and experiences that influenced the transition.

What made the difference?

Share your reflections by unmuting or responding in the chat.



The transition involves more than changing campuses.

Academic Demands

New course structures, increased workload, and higher expectations for student independence.

New Environment

Navigating a larger campus, changing classrooms, managing complex schedules, and adapting to multiple teachers.

Social & Emotional Adjustment

Building a sense of belonging, developing peer relationships, ensuring personal safety, practicing self-advocacy, and knowing when to ask for help.

Continuity of Support

Maintaining vital accommodations, specialized services, open communication lines, and effective learning strategies.

What Do We Mean by “Non-Mandated”?

A proactive school-transition framework
A voluntary or locally developed process to help students with disabilities prepare for the move from middle/intermediate school to high school, regardless of whether they are yet receiving formal postsecondary transition planning through their IEP.

The framework could help schools:

- *Start preparing students before the transition year.*
- *Identify individual needs, strengths, preferences, and support strategies.*
- *Connect sending-school and receiving-school staff.*
- *Involve students and families in meaningful ways.*
- *Check whether planned supports are in place and working.*

Five research-informed domains for discussion

01 Student voice and individualized planning

Understand student strengths, concerns, interests, communication preferences, and support needs. Include students in decisions in ways that are meaningful and accessible.

02 Preparation and skill development

Practice navigating the campus, following schedules, accessing support, managing materials, communicating needs, and using assistive technology.

03 Family partnership

Gather family perspectives, answer questions, communicate timelines, and make information accessible in the family's preferred language and format.

04 Cross-school coordination

Clarify who communicates, what information is needed, who receives it, and how continuity of services and accommodations is supported.

05 System structures and follow-through

Establish a timeline, clear roles, usable resources, a receiving-school contact, and a way to check whether supports are implemented.

Imagine the student experience

Kai is an eighth-grade student with an IEP. Kai has made progress in middle school with familiar teachers and predictable routines. At high school, Kai will have several teachers, a larger campus, different class expectations, and more responsibility for tracking assignments and seeking assistance.

Kai's family wants to know who will help ensure supports are in place. Kai is worried about finding classes on time and asking unfamiliar teachers for help. The middle-school case manager knows what has worked, but the high-school team has not yet met Kai.

What Might a Transition Framework Include?

1. BEFORE

Grade 7–8

Prepare and identify needs

Gather student and family input; identify strengths, concerns, and effective supports; introduce high-school expectations; determine what the student wants to practice.

2. CONNECT

Spring

Coordinate across schools

Identify contacts at both schools; coordinate appropriate information-sharing; arrange visits, orientation, or other preparation based on individual needs.

3. LAUNCH

Summer / Start

Practice and prepare

Provide accessible orientation, schedule and campus practice, introductions to key staff, and a clear process for requesting assistance.

4. FOLLOW UP

First Weeks

Check and adjust

Ask the student and family how things are going; verify supports are available; resolve emerging barriers; adjust preparation or supports when needed.

Breakout Activity: Build the Support System

Recommend the resources, processes, and support systems HIDOE should consider when developing a non-mandated middle-to-high-school transition framework.

Identify needs

What do students with disabilities, families, middle schools, and high schools need to make this transition successful?

Identify supports & resources

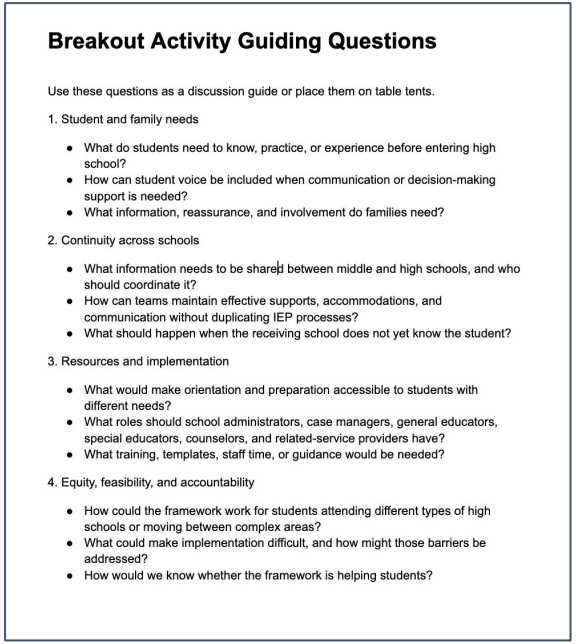
What tools, activities, staff roles, communication processes, or training would address those needs?

Make it workable

Who should be responsible? When should each support occur? What barriers could prevent implementation?

Select priorities

Identify your group's three highest-priority recommendations.



Breakout Activity Guiding Questions

Use these questions as a discussion guide or place them on table tents.

1. Student and family needs

- What do students need to know, practice, or experience before entering high school?
- How can student voice be included when communication or decision-making support is needed?
- What information, reassurance, and involvement do families need?

2. Continuity across schools

- What information needs to be shared between middle and high schools, and who should coordinate it?
- How can teams maintain effective supports, accommodations, and communication without duplicating IEP processes?
- What should happen when the receiving school does not yet know the student?

3. Resources and implementation

- What would make orientation and preparation accessible to students with different needs?
- What roles should school administrators, case managers, general educators, special educators, counselors, and related-service providers have?
- What training, templates, staff time, or guidance would be needed?

4. Equity, feasibility, and accountability

- How could the framework work for students attending different types of high schools or moving between complex areas?
- What could make implementation difficult, and how might those barriers be addressed?
- How would we know whether the framework is helping students?

Share out

Each group shares:

- One essential student or family need.
- One recommended support or resource.
- One implementation barrier and possible solution.
- One recommendation HIDOE should prioritize.