

Special Education Advisory Council
Annual Report for SY 2019-20



Message from the Chair

Each year, as I reflect on the activities past, I am awed by how much SEAC has accomplished. We focused on three areas, Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Professional Development (PD) and Inclusive Education (IE). We felt these were the most important then to the special education community. However in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic my thoughts go out to the teachers and families in Hawai'i.



We are experiencing a new and unprecedented chapter in public education. There is a huge learning curve in the road that students, teachers, district administrators and families are traveling together. We are navigating uncharted waters with little idea of what to expect. This is a crisis, not a time to be criticizing. Teachers love your kids and will be doing their absolute best!

As we embark on understanding eLearning, hybrid or blended learning, I ask you to refrain from publicly commenting on teachers, schools, districts or families for the way they are teaching, the lessons they're assigning, or the decisions that are being made. Instead, stand up for educators. I promise that educating & keeping our children safe is still everyone's #1 priority.

To educators, families are doing the best they can. They are trying to follow unfamiliar lesson plans, keeping their children engaged in learning, and progressing rather than stagnating. We are all in this together! We will get through this as a better stronger community.

Thank you to all that we have worked with, learned from, and shared with this past school year. I'd especially like to thank Heidi Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of the Office of Student Support Services, Cara Tanimura, Director of the Office of Monitoring and Compliance and Annie Kalama, Director of the Exceptional Support Branch. They were always willing to listen to us as we delved into their areas of expertise. Thanks go out to our legislators and the Board of Education for hearing our testimonies and using them to help guide their way.

And most of all, thank you to the members of the Special Education Advisory Council for all their hard work. I look forward to serving another year with you as your chair.

Finally, as always, we hope that all special education stakeholders find the information in this report of interest and value. SEAC always welcomes your feedback.

Aloha Nō,
Martha Guinan

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Purpose

SEAC shall provide policy guidance with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities in the State. (IDEA, CFR 300.167)

Vision

SEAC believes in optimizing the educational achievement of every child through a strong public education system that is proactive and supportive of students, families and educators. To that end SEAC will use its strength as a broad based constituency group to play an active and influential role in decisions affecting policies, programs and services.

Mission

The mission of SEAC is to guide and assist the Hawaii Department of Education in fulfilling its responsibility to meet the individual needs of children with disabilities.

Functions of SEAC

1. Advise the Department of Education of unmet needs within the State in the education of children with disabilities. CFR 300.169(a)
2. Comment publicly on any rules or regulations proposed by the State regarding the education of children with disabilities. CFR 300.169(b)
3. Advise the Department of Education in developing evaluations and reporting on data to the Secretary of Education, U.S. Department of Education, under Section 618 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. CFR 300.169(c)
4. Advise the Department of Education in developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring reports. CFR 300.169(d)
5. Advise the Department of Education in developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities. CFR 300.169(e)
6. Monitor the implementation of activities and timetable pursuant to consent decrees or court orders regarding the education of children with disabilities. (IDEA 90 regulation maintained by SEAC because of the Felix Consent Decree).
7. Advise on the education of eligible students with disabilities who have been convicted as adults and incarcerated in adult prisons. (IDEA 97 regulation maintained by SEAC with representation by the Department of Public Safety).
8. Review Hawaii special education due process hearing decisions and findings. CFR 300.513(d)1
9. Review and comment with regards to the Department's federal and state budgets for special education.

SEAC Membership



SEAC is made up of a diverse group of individuals with expertise in a variety of areas affecting special education and related issues. Persons with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities comprise a majority of the membership. Members are appointed by the Superintendent and serve without compensation for three-year terms. A roster of SEAC members for School Year 2019-20 can be found on page 13.

Recommendations to the Superintendent



Dr. Kishimoto

A major responsibility of SEAC is to advise the Superintendent on the unmet needs of students with disabilities and offer up specific recommendations. The following recommendations were made regarding the

Re-opening of Schools for SY 20-21:



Recommendations to the Superintendent

Past recommendations in the germination process



The following recommendations have been offered to the Superintendent in past annual reports and in testimonies to the Board of Education. While these 'seeds' have been planted, SEAC is awaiting additional movement on them.

1 Conflict Resolution - Mediation

Work with SEAC and other interested stakeholders to launch a public awareness campaign on the benefits of mediation for resolving conflicts between schools and parents whose children are eligible for special education.

2 Professional Development

Utilize parents and student leaders on professional development teams to model the home-school partnership that enhances academic success for students with disabilities. Open trainings to a broad range of stakeholders, so that they may hear the same message and commit to the same goals for improving student outcomes.

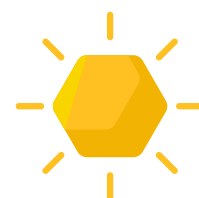


3 Due Process

To ensure transparency, offer easily located and navigated HIDOE web pages for posting special education hearing decisions, written complaints and other due process information. Organize the web pages by school year and update regularly.

4 Achievement Gap

Discontinue the use of a High Needs Group (combining special education students with English Learners and students who are economically disadvantaged) to determine the achievement gap. Report the achievement gap on statewide assessments by each subgroup compared to Non-High Needs students.



5 School Community Councils

Ensure that there is adequate representation of the special education student population on each School Community Council (SCC).

6 Applied Behavior Analysis

Continue to work with SEAC and the UH College of Education to amend HRS 465D to create an exemption from ABA licensure for those special education teachers licensed in severe, profound and autism who have received the appropriate training to develop and implement behavior plans for students with IEPs.



Data Infographic on Student Characteristics



POSITIVE TRENDS Regarding Special Education Student Data

1

Hui Pu, the inclusive education initiative begun in 2017, with technical assistance and training provided by Stetson & Associates, Inc., has shown remarkable gains in including students with disabilities in the general education classroom for most of the school day.

CADRE*	PRE % LRE	CURRENT % LRE	% PTS. GAIN
Cadre 1	35.5	64.3	28.8
Cadre 2	51.3	64.4	13.1
Cadre 3	38.1	62.9	24.8
Cadre 4	58.0	75.8	17.8
Cadre 5	56.0	69.4	13.4

66.9%

Inclusion rate for Hui Pu Students

vs.

44.0%

Inclusion rate for ALL Students

* A Hui Pu Cadre refers to 10 schools who receive training and technical support together.

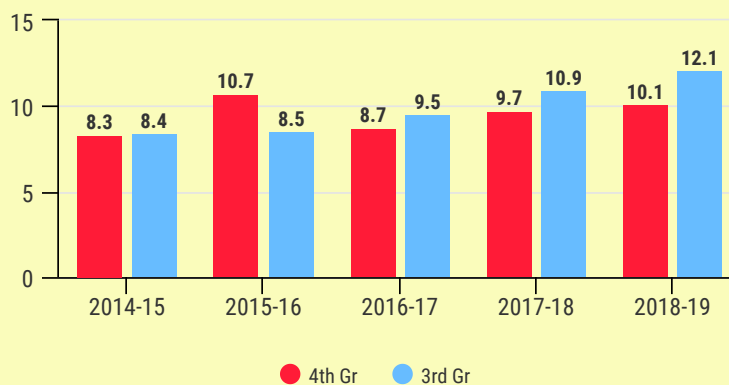
Hui Pu has shown that rapid improvement in including students is possible. By contrast, Hawaii's schools taken as a whole have remained 53rd in the state/territory ranking for decades when it comes to including students in the general education classroom for more than 80% of the day (see Item 3 on page 3 of this data infographic).

Source: [4/24/20 Stetson briefing to SEAC](#) and [Strategic Plan Report for SY 18-19](#).

2

Hawaii's State Systemic Improvement Plan set a target of improving reading proficiency over time for 3rd and 4th grade students with learning disabilities, speech and/or language delays and other health disabilities. The chart below documents steady growth in proficiency scores on the Smarter Balance Assessment.

% of 3rd & 4th Graders with Disabilities Who Were Proficient in ELA on the SBA



+33.7%

improvement in combined scores for 3rd & 4th graders over a 5-year period

● 4th Gr ● 3rd Gr

Source: [SSIP - Phase III Year 4 Sustainability Plan](#)

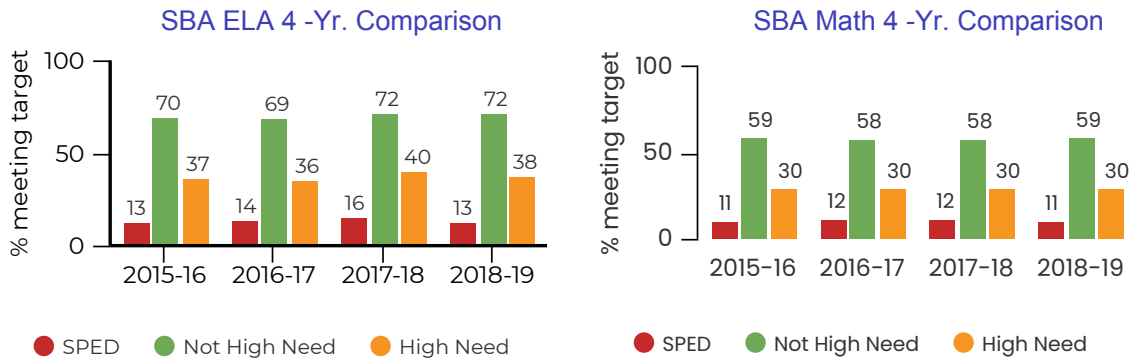
Data Infographic on Student Characteristics (cont.)



AREAS OF CONCERN Regarding Special Education Student Data

1

Students with disabilities are in the lowest performing student subgroup on the Smarter Balance Assessment with little to no improvement over the last four years. The gap with non-high need students is **huge**.

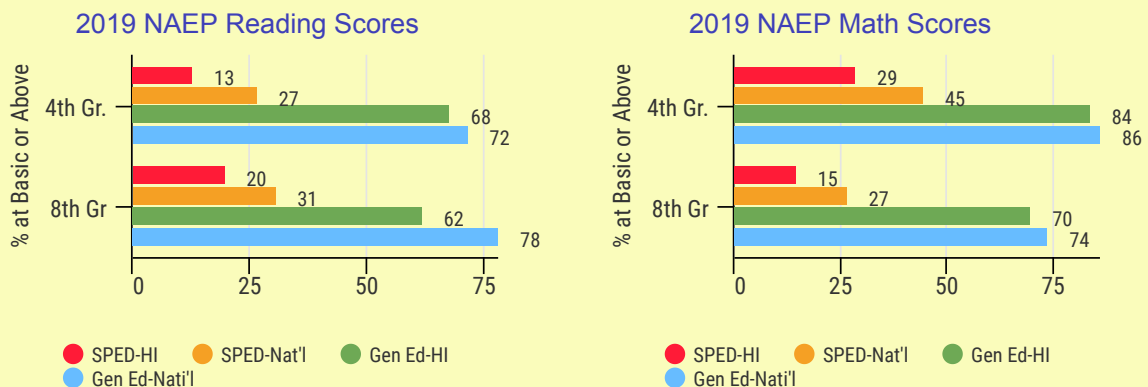


Hawaii still uses a High Needs category made up of a combination of special education, English Learner and economically disadvantaged students to measure Achievement Gap on the Strategic Plan. Special education students are not only 45-50 percentage points below general education students, but they are also underperforming the other subgroups that make up the High Needs category.

Source: DOE Strategic Plan Dynamic Report – Achievement Gap and Academic Achievement

2

Hawaii SPED students have lower NAEP math and reading scores than the national average, and the gap between Hawaii's SPED and general education students is larger than it is nationally.



The National Assessment of Educational Performance (NAEP) is the only statewide assessment that is taken in all 50 states, thereby allowing for comparisons of academic achievement. The scores above reflect achievement of "Basic" or above. Hawaii has received a determination of **needs assistance** from the Office of Special Education Programs in large part because of poor academic performance.

Source: NAEP Data Explorer Tool

Data Infographic on Student Characteristics (cont.)



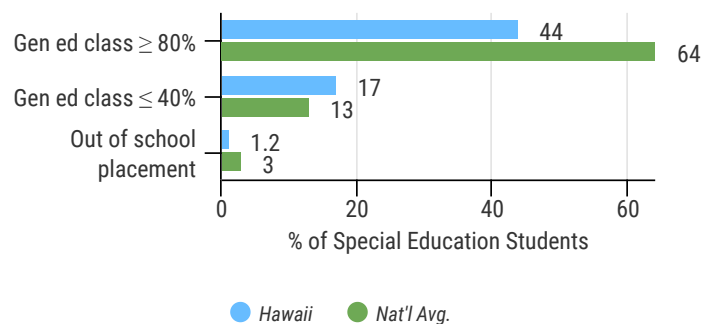
AREAS OF CONCERN Regarding Special Education Student Data

3

Despite the success of Hui Pu schools in including students with disabilities in the general education classroom for most or all of the school day, Hawaii still has the lowest rate of inclusion in the nation. **44%** of students with IEPs spent 80% or more of their day in the general education classroom in SY 18-19 compared to a national average of 64%.

The second category of the chart on the right--in a gen ed class $\leq 40\%$ --refers primarily to students in self-contained classrooms. The goal going forward is to reduce the % of students in self-contained settings to get closer to the national average of 13%. On a positive note, Hawaii has one of the lowest rates in the nation of students who receive special education services in a separate facility or school.

LRE for 6-21 Yr. Olds - Hawaii vs. Nat'l Avg.

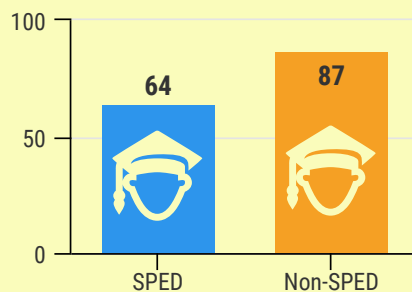


Source: IDEA Part B Child Count and Educational Environments

4

23% fewer students with disabilities graduate with a high school diploma compared to students without disabilities.

% of Student Graduates Class of 2018

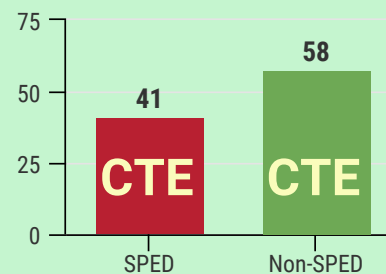


Source: 2018-19 Strategic Plan Report - Graduation

5

Likewise, **17%** fewer students with disabilities complete a career and technical education (CTE) program by the time they reach 12th grade.

% of 12th Graders Completing CTE



Source: 2018-19 Strategic Plan Report - CTE

Data Infographic on Student Characteristics (cont.)

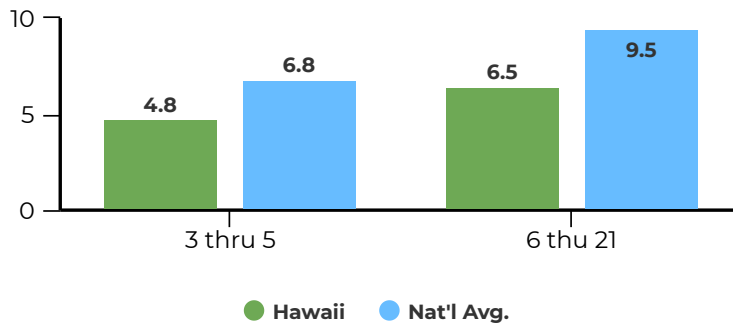


AREAS OF CONCERN Regarding Special Education Student Data

6

In Hawaii the percentage of children aged 3 through 21 that are found eligible for special education services is about **2 to 3 percentage points lower** than the national average for both 3 through 5 year olds and 6 through 21 year olds. This may indicate that we are underserving students with disabilities.

% of Special Education Students Served as a % of the Total Population



This chart measures how many students are counted as receiving special education as a percentage of all children in that age group in the state. Hawaii's rate for 6 through 21 year old students is the lowest in the nation, while our rate for 3 through 5 year olds is among the five states with the lowest percentages served.

Source: IDEA Part B Child Count and Educational Environments Data for SY 18-19

7

23% of students with IEPs missed 15 or more days of school in the 2018-19 SY compared to 14% of students without disabilities.



Factors that contribute to the chronic absenteeism of special education students include out-of-school suspensions, chronic health conditions and incidences of bullying--all of which are experienced at higher rates than those of students without disabilities.

Source: 2018-19 DOE Strategic Plan Dynamic Report

8

Only **1 in 3** students with disabilities are attending college after graduation--about half the rate of students without disabilities.

% of graduates enrolling in college/trade/vocational school in the year after graduation

30%



Spec. Ed

vs.

57%



Gen Ed

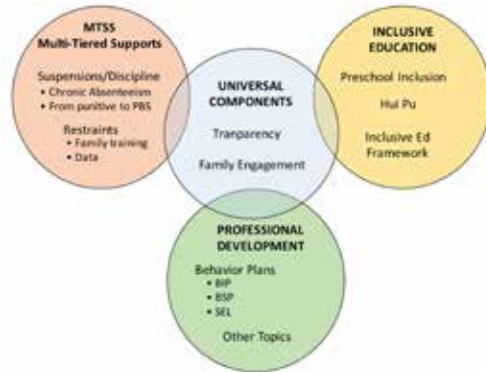
Students who enroll in post-secondary education have a greater likelihood of employment, higher earnings, and improved health outcomes. Many students with disabilities drop out prior to receiving a degree.

Source: SY 18-19 APR Indicator 14 - Post School Outcomes

Major Activities of School Year 19-20

SEAC Priority Setting for the School Year

Each school year begins with prioritizing key issues to examine for the purpose of growing member expertise and developing recommendations for improving services to students with disabilities. SEAC's August 9th meeting identified the Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS), inclusive education and professional development (particularly in the area of behavioral supports). Members agreed to look for common elements of family engagement and transparency for each issue.



Input on Inclusive Practices

Improving access to inclusive education has been SEAC's goal for many years. Early in the school year, SEAC provided feedback on an Inclusive Practices Framework developed by the Exceptional Support Branch. Members also offered feedback on a video shown during Inclusive Education Week in December. Some of the comments made by educators in the video were interpreted as insensitive by three members of the public who appealed to SEAC to investigate. After viewing the video, it was apparent that the manner in which the messaging was received by a viewer was dependent in large part on having information about the specific efforts in the schools to promote inclusion.



SEAC was privileged to share an extended dialogue with Frances Stetson whose consulting firm was contracted by the Exceptional Support Branch to mentor a total of 50 schools over a three-year period. The aim was to establish practices to enable students with disabilities to receive a quality education along with IDEA supports in the general education classroom. The program, called *Hui Pu*, is now building capacity in each complex area to provide ongoing quality technical assistance on the provision of inclusive education to its feeder schools.



Letter to the Secretary of Education

In response to concern from the special education community, SEAC wrote to Secretary Betsy DeVos and Assistant Secretary Mark Schultz urging the USDOE not to seek additional waiver authority for IDEA provisions during the COVID-19 pandemic. SEAC followed the example of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities in recommending a continuation of FAPE, involvement of parents in IEP team decisions, maintenance of parents' due process rights, and appropriate expenditure of IDEA funds. The infographic at right was prepared for informational purposes.



Major Activities of School Year 19-20 (cont.)

Infographic Work Groups

SEAC has embraced the practice of creating infographics to express complex information more simply, so that others gain enough understanding to enter a conversation on the issue. Four infographics co-created by members and HIDOE representatives were vetted by the Council during the school year for wide distribution:



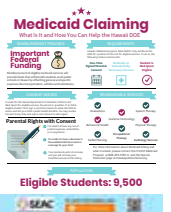
School Health Services describes the process to get medical support for a student at school. Whether a child has a medical condition from birth or is recently diagnosed by a physician, the reader is taken through the steps for coordinating services, describing who is responsible for each step.



I Can Help My Keiki Learn to Read was created to complement Hawaii's State Systemic Improvement Plan target of reading achievement for 3rd and 4th graders with disabilities. The infographic is aimed at providing young parents with the tools and encouragement to work on their child's reading skills at home.



Inclusive Education in Hawaii describes SEAC's vision for inclusive education as it relates to the six basic tenets of Na Hopena A'o--a strengthened sense of belonging, responsibility, excellence, aloha, total well-being and Hawaii.



Medicaid Claiming: What Is It and How You Can Help the Hawaii DOE is a simple explanation of medicaid reimbursements for related services provided to Medicaid eligible students with disabilities. It encourages parents of these students to provide consent, so that the federal funds can be used to offset the costs of providing services. **For more information on SEAC's infographics, go to: <http://seac-hawaii.org/infographics/>.**

Annual Performance Plan (APR)/State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)

The Annual Performance Plan (APR), including the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP), is the main monitoring tool of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) for ensuring that states are both 1) complying with the provisions of IDEA, and 2) providing appropriate supports to special education students that result in positive academic and functional performance and growth. At the beginning of the school year, SEAC members reviewed the determination of "needs assistance" by OSEP for the APR/SSIP submitted in 2019. In December and March members reviewed data for the 2020 APR/SSIP submission and helped to set targets for APR results indicators as well as SSIP reading proficiency targets for a subset of 3rd and 4th grade students with disabilities. (To see Hawaii's APR submitted in February, 2020 click here. To see the Phase III, Year 4 SSIP submitted in April 2020, click here.

Major Activities of School Year 19-20 (cont.)

Maintaining a Presence at the Hawaii Board of Education

At the beginning of the school year, SEAC supported the Board's priority to develop bold teacher recruitment and retention strategies culminating in the approval of a pay differential for classroom teachers in three categories--special education, Hawaiian immersion, and geographically hard to fill positions. SEAC also urged the Board to consider revising the School Climate and Discipline policy to address the high rates of suspension of special education students.



Meetings became virtual with the advent of school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Testimonies took on a sense of urgency as the Board discussed weighty issues such as graduation policy waivers, CARES Act funding, summer programming and principles and priorities for the re-opening of schools for the 20-21 school year. SEAC's voice supported elevating resources for students with disabilities who were disproportionately affected by the closure of schools. Testimony also encouraged the Department to provide timely information to families to allow for planning.

Testifying at the Hawaii State Legislature

SEAC teamed with the University of Hawaii Department of Special Education to educate Chairs of the Education Committees on the need to exempt teachers with a specialization in severe, profound and autism from Applied Behavior Analysis licensure requirements. Despite the failure to pass an exemption this session, SEAC and UH are committed to continue working toward the desired change. Other issues that SEAC supported included:



- ▶ standardized and transparent data collection on discipline, restraints, and school climate;
- ▶ special education teacher pay differentials;
- ▶ teacher and recruitment pay incentives;
- ▶ preschool expansion that offers inclusive placement for keiki with disabilities;
- ▶ a Transition Support Network; and
- ▶ a requirement for DOE to track and publish the use of all exclusionary discipline broken down by student subgroup.

Public Outreach

SEAC utilizes its infographics as an educational tool to bring the public and the special education community into the conversation on topics addressed during monthly meetings. Each agenda begins with invited Input from the Public which is communicated in person or through emails. Much of the input received in SY 19-20 was in response to the new SpEd funding formula. The postponement of the annual SPIN Conference due to the Governor's Stay at Home Order prevented SEAC members from manning an annual informational table to reach out to parents.

Major Activities of School Year 19-20 (cont.)

New SpEd Funding Formula

SEAC was offered an opportunity to comment on the Department's proposed SpEd Funding Formula for SY 20-21 that was created in response to a Special Education Task Force recommendation for greater predictability, transparency and equity. The new plan will provide funds directly to schools to use in hiring staff, with complex areas holding a percentage of the funds for special staffing situations. SEAC asked for an opportunity to provide input into adjusting student weights in Year Two of the formula implementation in order to remove disincentives for including students with more significant disabilities in the general education classroom.



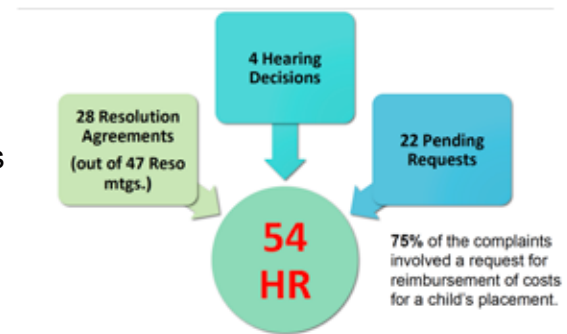
Determining the Need for Individualized Instructional Support (ISS)

The Department established a new process in SY 19-20 to determine the need for 1:1 instructional supports, so that students who need support only intermittently do not become overly dependent. A SEAC parent member initiated a dialogue prompted the perceived effort in the parent community that the Department was attempting to take away supports for students with complex behavior and communication challenges. SEAC offered suggestions on communicating the changes in to parents in order to reassure them how their child's need for support will be met by staff other than a 1:1 aide. A work group was formed to develop an infographic that explains the range of behavioral supports.

Due Process Review

An annual responsibility of SEAC as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is to review special education due process hearing decisions. There is no additional guidance from Congress on what to do with this information. However, SEAC has committed for the last 18 years, to learn as much as it can regarding dispute resolution processes in order to make informed recommendations to the Department on preserving trust between family and school by improving communication and resolving disagreements in the early stages. SEAC's review of the SY18-19 due process activity was hampered by a delayed access to some of the hearing decisions which had yet to be posted on the HIDOE website. The actual number of decisions is 8. More than half of the hearing requests that were filed were resolved prior to a formal hearing, indicating that parents who filed those requests were likely to have received some if not all of the relief they were seeking on behalf of their child.

Resolution of SY 2018-19 Hearing Requests



SEAC has been disappointed in the low utilization of mediation as a means of working out disagreements between parents and school personnel. Mediations are conducted by an impartial mediator, and rates of agreement are high. Only nine requests for mediation were made in SY 18-19, with 5-7 mediations actually held.



SEAC Member Roster SY 19-20

Ms. Martha M. Guinan, Chair	Individual with a Disability
Ms. Dale Matsuura, Co-Vice Chair (Staff Success)	Teacher, Honolulu District
Ms. Ivalee Sinclair, Co-Vice Chair (Legislation)	Individual with a Disability
Dr. Patricia Sheehey, Co-Vice Chair (Student Success)	University of Hawaii Representative
Ms. Andrea Alexander	Parent - Leeward District
Ms. Brendelyn Ancheta	Parent - Kauai District
Ms. Virginia Beringer	Parent - Windward District
Ms. Mary Brogan (alt: Ms. Rebecca Choi)	Developmental Disabilities Division, DOH
Ms. Deborah Cheeseman	Special Education Teacher
Ms. Annette Cooper	Parent - Central District
Mr. Mark Disher	Parent - Hawaii District, Charter School Representative
Dr. Kurt Humphrey (alt: Dr. Scott Hashimoto)	Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division, DOH
Ms. Cathy Kahooanohano	Representative of Students Who Are Homeless, DOE
Ms. Tina King	Military Family Representative
Ms. Bernadette Lane	Child Welfare Branch, DHS
Ms. Cheryl Matthews	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, DHS
Ms. Kaili Murbach	Parent - Maui District
Ms. Carrie Pisciotto	Early Intervention Section, DOH
Ms. Kau'i Rezentes	Parent - Leeward District
Ms. Rosie Rowe	Parent Training and Information Center
Dr. David Royer	University of Hawaii Representative
Mr. James Street	Private Schools Representative
Mr. Francis Taele	Adult Corrections/Department of Public Safety
Mr. Steven Vannatta	Community Childrens Council Representative
Ms. Lisa Vegas	Representative of Youth Corrections - Olomana School
Ms. Jasmine Williams	Parent - Honolulu District
Ms. Susan Wood	Community Representative
Ms. Cara Tanimura and Ms. Annie Kalama	Liaisons to the Superintendent
Dr. Robert Campbell	Liaison to the Military
Ms. Amanda Kaahanui	Staff
Ms. Susan Rocco	Staff

Tentative Meeting Schedule for SY 20-21

SEAC meetings are typically held on the 2nd Friday of the month, except during the months of June and July. Due to COVID-19 health precautions and the Governor's temporary exception to the Sunshine Law, meetings will be held virtually until further notice.

August 14, 2020

September 11, 2020

October 16, 2020 (due to Fall Break)

November 13, 2020

December 11, 2020

January 8, 2021

February 12, 2021

March 12, 2021

April 9, 2021

May 14, 2021

Meetings are open to the public and each meeting agenda includes time for input from the public. Individuals may present their input in writing by mail, fax or email or by speaking to members virtually at the meetings. (Agendas, meeting schedules, minutes and other SEAC reports can be found online at <http://www.seac-hawaii.org>).

Contact Information for SEAC

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SEAC Word Cloud - "Why I Serve on SEAC"



~ SEAC Member Reflection August 9, 2019