

OFFICE OF Student Support Services



EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT BRANCH

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The **Exceptional Support Branch (ESB)** supports districts and complex areas with policies, procedures, guidelines, tools and professional development, ensuring students with disabilities the access and opportunity to succeed in engaging learning environments like all other students.

The primary goal of both sections within the ESB is to provide leadership and support for our students with disabilities who receive special education and related services throughout Hawaii Public and Charter schools. This is done under the authority of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), Section 504 Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and their corresponding administrative rules, HAR Chapter 60 and 61.

Within the HIDOE tri-level system, implementation of IDEA requirements is carried out by state offices, complex area offices, and schools. ESB leads the development of vertical and horizontal systems of support to administrators, teachers and families to ensure effective implementation of special education processes and best practices.

The general operations of the ESB include the following:

- Develops procedures and standards of practice for the education of students with disabilities, ages 3 to 22, to be applied throughout Hawaii Public and Charter schools.
- Provides technical assistance and training to districts, complex areas, schools, cooperating agencies and parents on addressing the needs of students with disabilities.
- Develops and manages statewide contracts, memorandums of agreements and affiliations to ensure students receive services by qualified staff.
- Manages both federal and general funded programs allocated to complex areas for the purpose of serving students with disabilities.

The ESB consists of the Special Education Section and the Special Needs Section. Both sections work collaboratively to ensure an accurate and timely response to the field's needs.

Special Education Section

The Special Education Section ensures the rights of children with disabilities and their parents are protected through the implementation of federal and state laws. It provides technical assistance and training to schools and complex areas on the implementation of the IDEA and corresponding administrative rules.

Special Needs Section

The Special Needs Section provides leadership, professional development and technical assistance to complexes, districts and schools in planning and implementing programs for low incidence student populations, implementation of Section 504 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, state assessment for students with disabilities and assistive technology. This section also provides direct assessment and support and services to students who are deaf/hard of hearing, visually impaired and students with significant cognitive, social and behavioral needs.

In addition to general operations and IDEA program oversight, the ESB is focused on the following targeted initiatives designed to build system and staff capacity.



Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)

The ESB provides guidance and resources to all complex areas to ensure students that need ABA services are provided by qualified professionals.

Incarcerated Adult Students

Special education and related services must be provided to incarcerated students under the age of 22. The ESB has accomplished this in partnership with the Department of Public Safety through a memorandum of agreement.

Inclusion Support

The ESB has sponsored a statewide initiative implementing inclusive practices at five cohorts of targeted schools. In partnership with complex area resource staff, each school receives onsite assistance in building a community that both embraces students with disabilities as valued community members and provides the support needed to ensure their success. Schools are provided with assistance on the use of resources and personnel, student centered decision making, various models of support services and instruction. A plan has been developed to scale up this work statewide.

Po'okela Special Day Program Center

Po'okela provides intensive specialized support for students who have a combination of severe social, behavioral, and communicative needs with cognitive impairment, neurodevelopmental disorder and who are not progressing in special education settings in school.

The ESB recognizes the value of its **community partners** and works closely with the following entities on increasing outcomes for students with disabilities.

Department of Human Services
Department of Health /Developmental Disabilities Division
Department of Health Early Intervention
Developmental Disabilities Council
Hawaii Disability Rights Center
Center on Disability Studies
University of Hawaii-Manoa
Hawaii Head Start
Special Parent Information Network
Leadership in Disabilities & Achievement of Hawaii

Post-Secondary Transition

The ESB provides support to staff, families and communities to improve the academic and functional achievement for students with disabilities as they transition from school to post-school. Activities include postsecondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation.

Pre-School

The ESB provides technical support and resources to schools and districts to ensure children ages 3-5 years old are provided special education and related services in the provision of a free and appropriate public education. Preschool students focus on developing appropriate skills.

Professional Learning

The ESB provides targeted and sustained professional learning opportunities to strengthen teacher practice and improve student outcomes. Professional learning is guided by the principles of adult learning theory (Trotter, 2006) and research on effective professional learning for teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2017). With the goal of improving academic and behavioral outcomes for all students with disabilities, ESB's capacity building efforts include implementation training, guidance documents, tools, and other various resources.

Special Populations (Autism, Deaf/ Hard of Hearing, Blind, Multiple Disabilities)

Additional technical assistance and supports are provided to the district resource staff supporting our students with disabilities who are low incidence but have significant needs. This includes the facilitation of professional learning communities, specialized implementation training and case by case consultation.

Students in Residential Facilities

The ESB provides students with mental health who are placed in Residential Facilities throughout the state with special education and related services.