

Special Education Task Force

SUMMATIVE REPORT

Co-Chairs

Interim Assistant Superintendent Donna Lum Kagawa, Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Student Support
Principal Lisa DeLong, Kailua Intermediate School

Membership

The Special Education Task Force (Task Force) was comprised of representatives from the following groups:

Leadership (Assistant Superintendents and Complex Area Superintendents), State office personnel, District personnel, Principals, Teachers, Parents, Hawai'i State Teachers Association, Hawai'i Government Employees Association, Hope Street Group, University of Hawai'i, and Special Education Advisory Council

Consultants

Office of Human Resources; Monitoring and Compliance Office; Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Support: Special Education Section; Office of Fiscal Services; and Teacher Induction Center

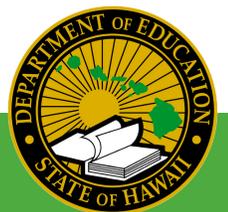
Feedback

The Task Force received input from the following groups:

Special Education Advisory Council, Council on Developmental Disabilities, Hope Street Group Fellows, Secondary Schools Principals Forum, Deputy's Principals Roundtable, District Educational Specialists, Student Service Coordinators, Complex Area Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents, and Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department) Teachers.

Dates

The Task Force met ten (10) times during the period of November 2017 through April 2018.



Superintendent's Charge

- Review of data analysis and evidence-based research to consider current best practices and the array of supports needed to implement best practices.
- Recommend steps to improve access to quality education for students with disabilities and ensure appropriate inclusion in the general education classroom.
- Prepare recommendations for the Superintendent to inform her Superintendent's Report on Special Education to the Board of Education in May 2018.



*I asked my son what makes him happy at school. He said, "Having friends, learning in the same classroom as my friends and having my aide with me. Oh, and math and science."
- HIDEOE Parent*

Guiding Questions

CONTINUUM OF SUPPORTS

- How can schools provide the array of educational environments their students with disabilities need?
- What supports and services should be available to students with disabilities in the general education class?
- What supports are needed to assist in making placement and service decisions for each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP)?

BUILDING CAPACITY

- Do educators and support staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to implement tiered interventions across the continuum of supports and services?
- Do staff have adequate time and resources to complete all of their assigned work?

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

- How can the system adequately meet the needs of students with disabilities equitably and effectively?

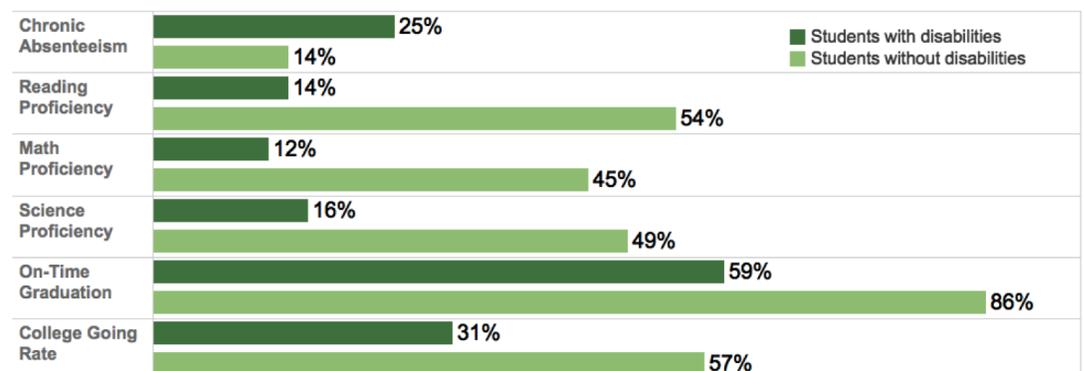
*Co-teaching helps me get more one-on-one attention. I feel like I can ask for help without burdening the teacher.
- HIDEOE Student*

Theory of Action

If we, the Task Force, believe that a quality education enables students to achieve their dreams of academic success, community engagement, and job readiness, we must:

- Develop a culture of shared responsibility for the success of all students;
- Develop a continuum of services within and across all schools that includes an array of interventions and supports;
- Empower educators through the provision of consistent and equitable resources and opportunities that address the unique needs and abilities of all students; and
- Improve achievement and growth for all students.

Indicators for students with disabilities show large gaps compared to non-disabled peers



Source: Strategic Plan Dynamic Report <http://bit.ly/HIDEOE-SPDR>
Values pulled for the 2016-2017 school year

Recommendations

Within the themes outlined in this report, the Task Force's recommendations are categorized into the following three types:



Short-Term
Recommendations



Long-Term
Recommendations



Practices that should be
standardized or improved

Design a Framework

★ ARTICULATE A SHARED VISION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

To improve opportunities for students with disabilities the Department should identify a shared vision of and create an inclusive education framework ensuring access to a quality education for all students which includes:

- Common language and definitions of inclusive education;
- Shared culture and ownership;
- A system of schoolwide, multi-level supports from preschool to post high school;
- Access to rigorous, well-rounded, meaningful learning experiences for all students;
- Educational decisions based on individual student needs;
- School and classroom design best practices and models;
- Quality core and specialized instruction;
- Well-planned transitions within and between schools, programs, and into post-secondary opportunities;
- Community/parent partnerships and transparency;
- Staff capacity (core knowledge, skills, and abilities); and
- Efficient use of resources.

Reframing inclusion using a larger universal design rubric may move the practice away from the “separateness of special education” to the “belongingness of general education.”
-Sailor, 2002

★ ASSESS THE GOVERNING STRUCTURE TO ENSURE A COHESIVE AND EFFECTIVE STATEWIDE SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

A systems-level approach to best practices, roles, responsibilities, and support is crucial to building inclusive schools. Inconsistencies in practices and communication are reported by school and district staff. The Department should assess and redesign the roles and responsibilities, protocols and procedures, systems of support and communication between the levels of state offices, complex areas, and schools.

In order to inform and adjust the vision and framework, a study should be conducted to identify best practices related to resource allocation at the school level (including, but not limited to, looking at numbers of qualified teachers, class size, the distribution of staff, IEP load, collaboration time and access to training).

★ DESIGN FUNDAMENTAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS

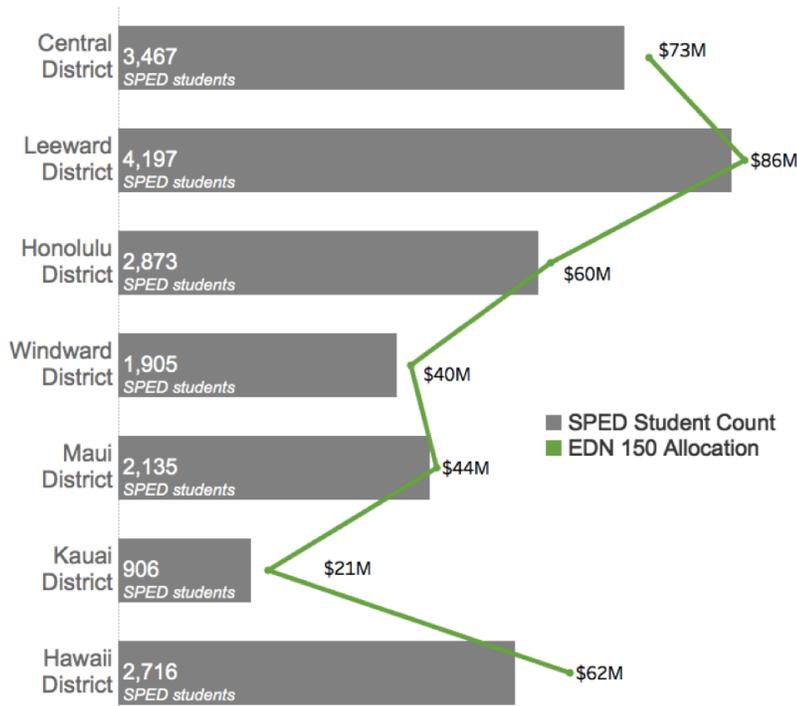
District educational specialists reported that schools consistently request help on educational decision-making, educational placement options, and supports and services provided in an inclusive setting. The Department needs to identify the core values, knowledge, skills, and abilities fundamental to the shared vision of inclusive education. Professional development in these areas should include, at a minimum:

- Compliance with state and federal requirements of Hawai‘i Administrative Rules Chapter 60 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- IEP development and process
- Best practices for transitions across grade levels, programs, and placements
- Standards-based instruction, formative assessment, and reporting
- Response to Intervention (RtI) Tier I Academic and Behavior
- Specially Designed Instruction
- Family engagement practices and partnerships
- Learning opportunities with the community and parent stakeholders

★ REDESIGN FUNDING ALLOCATION BASED ON STUDENT NEEDS

The current proportional staffing methodology is based on the Department’s official Child Count for each Complex Area or District. The Task Force recommends a funding mechanism that is more equitable, transparent, and provides greater predictability to the schools. Based on the individual needs of the student as defined by the IEP, the methodology should include:

FY 2017 SPED Student Count vs. Allocation



Source: Office of Fiscal Services
 EDN 150 includes general funds, federal funds, special funds and revolving funds.
 EDN 150 does not include Weighted Student Formula (WSF) funds.

- A weighted system for students with disabilities that supplements the base funding with additional funds based on student characteristics. It is not dependent on a student's least restrictive environment and follows the student. The metric would include value-added weights for disability based on the levels of student support, and is similar to the weighting concept utilized in the staffing allocation formula used in 2009.
- A Risk Pool to address special conditions such as emergency cases/needs; hard-to-fill areas; geographical isolation that impacts access to resources such as physicians, service providers and response to high-end situations; multiple level schools such as K-12, K-8, multi-track; and highly-specialized programs such as medically fragile, deaf and hard-of-hearing, and blind.
- Short-term funding to schools, such as grants, to supplement existing or proposed inclusive education models that maximize resources within the school and/or showcase best practices that could inform inclusive practices systemwide.

Support Transformation

ADOPT A REPLACEMENT TOOL TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF IEP PROCESS

It is recommended that the Department replace the state's current data documentation system, the electronic Comprehensive Student Support System (eCSSS). Survey responses from Student Services Coordinators indicate that most professional development sessions on the IEP process emphasizes documentation of the data in the system. Updated data fields in eCSSS are needed to improve educational decision-making for students. Although needed for current and future data collection, updates to eCSSS are cost prohibitive. Going forward, the Department should adopt a new tool and train personnel to emphasize and develop student-focused IEPs that aligns with the inclusive education framework.

IMPLEMENT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM ACROSS STATE OFFICES, COMPLEX AREAS, AND SCHOOLS

Educators across the state - including teachers, administrators, support staff, and educational officers at the complex area and state levels - must have quality, embedded, and sustained professional learning. This effort requires a complementary and coherent systems approach to implement an array of high-leverage professional development. The Department must identify and define implementation roles and communication protocols for staff at schools, complex areas, and state offices. With consistent implementation, the shared vision of inclusive education will be realized.

★ PROVIDE ADEQUATE TIME FOR CARE COORDINATION AND PREPARATION

The workload for teachers involves a multitude of responsibilities in order to best serve our students with disabilities. Essential duties include balancing a comprehensive network of observations, testing, IEP development, meetings, and data collection. The Task Force recommends substantive support for the collaboration between special education and general education teachers on planning, delivery, and monitoring of student learning outcomes. Towards this end, the Department should enable schools to incorporate options such as:

- Eight (8) to ten (10) substitute days;
- Recall pay for after school hours; and/or
- Additional release period.

Inadequate support from administrator:

Percentage of Teachers

61%

Inadequate time for classroom planning:

73%

Inadequate time for IEP reporting:

85%

Hawai'i State Teacher Association. (2015). HSTA teacher survey. P.5



BUILD CONSISTENCY OF PLACEMENT CALCULATION

In school year 2016-2017, the state of Hawai'i's inclusion rate was 37%. This inclusion rate is defined as the percentage of students with disabilities who spend at least 80% of the day with their peers in general education settings. There is an inconsistent practice and understanding among school personnel in calculating the percentage of minutes that students with disabilities spend in the general education setting with non-disabled peers. It is imperative that the Department provide support to schools to enable accurate determination, calculation and documentation of data around students' least restrictive environments.

37%

Percentage of students with disabilities in the general education setting for 80% or more of the day

Sustain Improvement



EXPAND PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

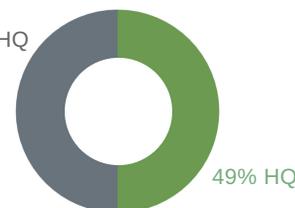
There is a significant gap in being able to fill our special education classrooms with effective and Hawai'i Qualified (HQ) teachers. The shortage impacts the capacity of schools to close the opportunity and achievement gap and promote student growth for our students with disabilities. The Department should attract and retain highly-qualified special education teachers and support personnel by:

- Attracting high school graduates to become special education teachers in partnership with higher education, legislature, and the Department. Recruitment could be promoted through academies and career pathways, marketing and outreach, loan forgiveness, and free college tuition in return for service.
- Offering courses through partnerships with institutes of higher education and the Department's online professional development system to increase the pool of qualified teachers to assist:
 - Secondary special education teachers who require content certification;
 - Current employees working towards HQ status;
 - Educational assistants aspiring to pursue a teaching career; and
 - Teacher candidates in accessing the University of Hawai'i's current free certification program
- Recruiting retired special education teachers to return to the classroom using the exemption afforded under Act 246.

This practice allows retired teachers to collect on their pension incomes while earning salaries that correspond with their steps and classifications at the time of retirement.

51% of Beginning SPED Teachers are not Hawai'i Qualified

51% Not HQ



*Source: Teacher Induction Center
Beginning Teachers are those in their first or second year of teaching*



EXPAND MENTORING AND NETWORKING FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

While all new educators are assigned a mentor, new special education teachers should have access to a mentor with expertise in special education. Evidence indicates that new teachers who are provided such access feel more supported, successful, and are more likely to remain in the Department as a special education teacher. To sustain ongoing retention of all teachers, opportunities for networking and participating in learning communities should be fostered beyond the induction and mentoring supports provided to new teachers.



IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION AND MONITORING PRACTICES

The Task Force identified the need to better measure and analyze the quality of inclusive education in Hawai'i to make more informed decisions for continuous improvement. A comprehensive system of monitoring and assessment must be developed to ensure that the state meets compliance requirements as well as quality assurance. Data collection and monitoring should occur at the state, complex area, and school level, inclusive of:

- Educational environment data, satisfaction, and performance outcomes for students with disabilities
- Professional development quality, participation, and implementation effectiveness
- Implementation of a cohesive and highly-effective and efficient governing structure
- Induction and mentoring outcomes for new special educators
- Teacher retention data
- Distribution of fiscal and human resources

Financial Implications

- There will be a need to convene a subgroup of the Committee on Weights (COW) led by the Department's Office of Fiscal Services (OFS) to determine the funding allocation based on student characteristics and the creation of a Risk Pool reserve. As a result, there may be the potential need for additional funding beyond what is currently generated based on enrollment.
- Staff training, retention efforts, and additional time provided for preparation and collaboration would all require multiple sources of general and federal funding. Funds needed to secure new IEP tools would be determined in consultation with the Office of Information Technology Services (OITS).
- The Department may need to repurpose existing resources and/or request for additional legislative funding to incentivize structures for inclusion (to include a step down funding plan).
- Additional positions to deepen a pool of special education mentors at the complex area level is a critical component to induct and retain new teachers. If supported in this way, customized support for both new and veteran teachers could be delivered for specific needs on a case-by-case basis.



What does inclusion mean to me? Access to learning, better outcomes on his IEP goals, the right supports to allow him (and his teachers) to succeed, promoting awareness of differences and diversity, being a part of the school and ultimately, at the end of the day, having my son in an inclusive setting means he goes to school happy and comes home happy.

- HIDEO Parent

Teaching in the inclusive environment has been eye-opening to me. I truly believe inclusion is what is best for all kids. I see great growth from my students who receive special education services both academically and socially. We have all learned, together, to be empathetic and keep each other challenged.

- HIDEO Teacher



Recommendation Summary



Short-Term Recommendations

- Articulate a shared vision of inclusive education
- Design fundamental professional development for all stakeholders
- Funding allocation based on student needs
- Provide adequate time for care coordination and preparation



Long-Term Recommendations

- Assess the governing structure to ensure a cohesive and effective statewide system of support
- Expand mentoring and networking for special education teachers
- Adopt a replacement tool to improve quality of IEP process
- Implement professional development system across state offices, complex areas, and schools
- Expand partnerships to support licensing and certification for special education teachers



Practices that should be standardized or improved

- Build consistency of placement calculation
- Improve data collection and monitoring practices

Key References

- Thousand, Jacqueline S. and Richard A. Villa, “*Making Inclusive Education Work*,” Educational Leadership 61, no. 2, 2003.
- *Andrew F. v. Douglas County School Dist.* RE-1, 580 U.S. March 22, 2017
- “Improving How Connecticut Funds Special Education”, Connecticut School Finance Project, March 2016.
- Education Commission of the States. *50-State Review: State Funding For Students With Disabilities*, June 2015.
- Virginia Department of Education, *Inclusive Practices in Successful Schools Guide for Assessing Progress and Future Steps*, 2017.
- Xuan Bui, Carol Quirk, Selene Almazan, Michele Valenti, “*Inclusive Education Research & Practice*”, Maryland Coalition for Inclusive Education, 2010.
- The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, Learning Forward, & Public Impact. *Coaching for impact: Six pillars to create coaching roles that achieve their potential to improve teaching and learning.* 2016.

I feel safe. Like everyone is on an equal playing field and being in a place where I don't feel judged helps me learn more.

- HIDEO 8th Grade Student

Task Force Membership

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