



1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819  
Tel: (808) 833-2711 ♦ Fax: (808) 839-7106 ♦ Web: www.hsta.org

Corey Rosenlee  
President  
Justin Hughey  
Vice President  
Amy Perruso  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Wilbert Holck  
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COMMITTEE

RE: AGENDA ITEM IV, B, PRESENTATION ON ANNUAL REPORTING OF  
THE 2017-2020 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND BOARD OF  
EDUCATION JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN INDICATORS FOR GOAL 1  
(STUDENT SUCCESS)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2017

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Cox and Members of the Committee:

No educational measure is perfect. To increase student learning, measures of student success must provide meaningful feedback to the teachers and administrators tasked with crafting our children's future. With that in mind, HSTA offers the following comments on the 2017 Goal 1: Student Success results, which we feel clarify the context for the information being reported today.

Regarding the inclusion rate indicator, the 51 percent target for the 2020 school year can only be achieved if the state receives and distributes more resources to special education. According to federal law, special needs students must be placed in the least restrictive environment that is appropriate for the child, as determined by the individualized education program process. Our state's inclusion rate cannot be escalated simply by mandate. Rather, it must comport with students' IEPs. That said, inclusion only works if teachers—both special education and general education teachers—are given adequate classroom resources, professional development, and planning and preparation time. We urge the DOE and the BOE to work with HSTA during the 2018 legislative session to secure more funding for our schools. HSTA will be introducing a constitutional amendment to increase school funding, which specifically includes special education. The DOE and BOE's support on this CONAM is vital. HSTA also recommends we look at how many special education

positions are not directly at the school level, and are held at the complex area and state level.

Concerning third-grade literacy and academic achievement indicators (ELA, Math, and Science), we continue to maintain that excessive amounts of standardized testing and accompanying mandated curricula diminish the quality of our children's educational experiences by replacing creativity and critical thinking with test-taking skills and rote content. Studies show that test scores strongly correlate with socioeconomic status: rich schools do well, while poor schools struggle. Because of the pressure to perform well on tests and their inability to control the socioeconomic status of their students, struggling schools cut back on arts and cultural education, career and technical courses, electives, and more, so that more resources can be spent on prefabricated programs and consultants that purport to increase test scores. We, again, invite the board to encourage the use of authentic assessments by establishing a pilot, which would align learning content with real-world experiences and meaningfully measure the growth of students' knowledge and skills over time.

With regard to achievement gap benchmarks, we note that many high-poverty schools that struggle to boost overall ELA, math, and science proficiency benchmarks have smaller achievement gaps than their more affluent and high-achieving peers. Nanakuli High and Intermediate, for instance, is 26 percentage points below the state ELA proficiency average, 24 points below the state math average, and 28 points below the state science average, but has an ELA achievement gap of only 21 points and a math achievement gap of only 5 points, both of which exceed the department's 2020 achievement gap targets. Mililani High School, in contrast, has an ELA proficiency score that is two percentage points above the state average, math score that is only 8 percentage points below the state average, and science score that is nine points above the state average. Yet, Mililani High School has a whopping 41 point ELA achievement gap and 30 point math gap, each of which are significantly worse than both the current overall state average and the department's 2020 goal. Similar results can be found when comparing other high-poverty and affluent schools—Konawaena High has a math achievement gap that is exactly half of Moanalua High's math achievement gap, despite Moanalua having exactly twice the percentage of students meeting proficiency in math as Konawaena. We believe that results like these show that high-poverty, low-achieving schools may have smaller achievement gaps precisely because overall achievement is generally lower in poor communities. Clearly, we should not ignore



HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION  
*Teaching Today for Hawaii's Tomorrow*

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the needs of students attending high-poverty schools just because poverty corresponds favorably with a school's ability to meet the DOE's achievement gap targets. This discrepancy should prompt the board and the department to reexamine the manner in which the achievement gap is calculated and, perhaps, the overall utility of the measure.

As it pertains to CTE Concentrators, our concern is that the 2017 results do not reflect a high level of career and technical mastery. Currently, to complete many CTE programs of study, a student must complete only two courses in addition to a foundational academic course: a core course and a cluster course. For example, the marketing program of study under the business career pathway requires completion of a core business course and a cluster marketing course, as well as a foundational economics class. While some programs also require a third-year concentration course, those that do not may fail to offer the rigor necessary to prepare students for employment in the corresponding vocation. Instead our goal should be to prepare our student with the licensure and skills needed to enter the workplace. We should be backward mapping the content that a certain CTE fields needs and then provide those courses to our students.

For High School Graduation rates, HSTA is concerned about the pressure to increase graduation rates and the shortcuts being taken, specifically in the offering of online credit recovery classes. These classes are offered to students who may be in jeopardy of failing a class. These credit recovery classes can take just a few days and be based on multiple choice exams where students can Google the answers. HSTA would request that the BOE request from the department how many credit recovery classes were taken in the 2016-2017 school year.

Today, we are asking the board to refocus on measures that matter, especially those indicators that encapsulate the "inputs" that impact student learning. We implore the board and the department to adopt a holistic system of support for struggling schools that advances whole child education (including wraparound services for disadvantaged and special needs students), expands academic curricula, and empowers teachers to become change agents in addressing community needs. One evidence-based strategy for assisting low performing schools

is the community schools model, which emphasizes wraparound services, like health care, and amplifies social services' access to school campuses. In employing high quality teaching and culturally sensitive curricula, prioritizing student wellness, and highlighting community engagement, community schools have been shown to increase graduation rates and college enrollment, while decreasing behavioral referrals and chronic absenteeism. Creating community schools in high-need areas would be an effective use of federal Title I funds, up to 7 percent of which may be used to uplift our state's lowest performing 5 percent of schools under the Every Student Succeeds Act.

We hope that you will take this opportunity to launch a paradigm shift in how we address the needs of our students. We ask you to use today's report to endorse a plan of action that will deliver the schools our keiki deserve.



**S E A C**  
**Special Education Advisory Council**

919 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 101

Honolulu, HI 96814

Phone: 586-8126 Fax: 586-8129

email: [spin@doh.hawaii.gov](mailto:spin@doh.hawaii.gov)

November 7, 2017

**Special Education  
Advisory Council**

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Maggie Cox, Chair  
Student Achievement Committee  
Hawaii State Board of Education  
P. O. Box 2360  
Honolulu, HI 96804

RE: IV. B. Presentation on annual reporting of the 2017-2020  
Department of Education and Board of Education Joint Strategic  
Plan indicators for Goal 1 (Student Success)

Dear Chair Cox and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) appreciates this opportunity to comment on the results of Strategic Plan student success indicators for 2016-2017 and on the Department's newly unveiled Strategic Plan Dynamic Report. We would also like to provide several recommendations for greater equity and accountability going forward.

**Strategic Plan Dynamic Report.** The new web-based tracking tool for Strategic Plan goals and success indicators by year, subgroup, ethnicity and complex area will be extremely helpful for SEAC and other education stakeholders to follow progress for key subgroups, including ethnicities. It offers transparency and ease of use that contrasts sharply with our past efforts to obtain this information. SEAC appreciates that Department staff made the extra effort to include data from School Year 2015-16 for comparison purposes. To date, we have only had time to cursorily examine the data for the nine indicators under Goal 1 (excluding school climate), and we look forward to exploring the links to more in-depth information on each success indicator. We also eagerly await data on Goals 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan to be presented on November 21st.

**Indicator Results for Special Education Students.** The actual SY 2016-17 results for the nine indicators for student success as they relate to special education students are quite disappointing. Overall, students with disabilities has the highest absenteeism, the poorest literacy, math and science results, and the lowest graduation rate of all key subgroups. Progress from 2015-16 was minimal or missing altogether. 3rd grade



**Indicator Results for Special Education Students (cont.)**

literacy scores fell 8 percentage points in SY 2016-17, while graduation rates fell 2 percentage points. Clearly there is much to be done to improve the delivery of quality services to this vulnerable population.

**Recommendations:**

**1) Set individual targets for each equity subgroup for each indicator.**

It is clear that the Department and the Board understand the importance of setting discrete targets for improvement, as targets help to focus energy and attention and to commit resources. The Strategic Plan sets both an overall student body baseline and a 2020 target for each success indicator, but no targets for the equity subgroups. By contrast, the recent ESSA Consolidated Plan set interim subgroup targets (SY 2019-20) for academic achievement (ELA and math) as well as graduation rates. SEAC believes these targets should also be reflected in the Strategic Plan report, and that efforts be made to develop equity targets for the remaining student success indicators.

**2) Further refine the description of the student success indicator for INCLUSION RATE by adding the requirement of supplementary aids and services, as needed by the student.**

The current description of the inclusion rate indicator is "the percentage of students receiving special education services who are in general education classes for 80% or more of the school day."

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that schools consider the need for supplementary aids and services when placing students in the least restrictive environment. These tools to help students work around their disabilities may include, but are not limited to, assistive technology, preferential seating, specialized equipment, planning time for collaboration, social interaction support, and staff training. Merely placing a student with disabilities in the general education classroom without the necessary supports may lead to diminished academic and functional achievement.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on the Strategic Plan report. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Respectfully,

Martha Guinan  
SEAC Chair

Ivalee Sinclair  
Legislative Committee Chair