

SB 1278

DEAN R. LISKUM, Ph.D.
MARRIAGE, FAMILY & CHILD THERAPIST
2682 Kiu Anu Place
Kalaheo, Hawaii 96741

February 27, 2009

Senator Donna Mercado Kim
Chair Senate Ways and Means Committee
Hawaii State Legislature
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Hearing on March 2, 2009
9:30 A.M.

In support of SB 1278

People in the State of Hawaii are dismayed and not just a little embarrassed every time the national roll calls of NAEP testing and SAT scores are published. While working as a public school counselor, I was frustrated as well with the large number of younger students who were routinely retained in kindergarten who were born during the last three months of the year, and decided to undertake research on our students' differences in performance utilizing an objective, long-term measure. The results of SAT scores for *all* grades tested 1994, 1995, 2000 and 2001 clearly showed younger students (born July-December) in Hawaii performed statistically significantly lower than their older peers in *both* reading and math. In addition, analysis of the Specific Learning Disability (SLD) population shows there are, on average, 24% (a weighted count) more students in the SLD program who were born during the latter half of the year. Both of these findings are irrefutable and indicated a need to change the kindergarten entrance cutoff birth date; such change was accomplished three years ago by the passage of Act 219.

The DOE implemented the change according to the letter of the law. What was not implemented was the spirit and intent of the law that logically pointed towards the development of a junior kindergarten curriculum and rigorous screening for those junior kindergarten children moving up to kindergarten during the year or to first grade at the end of the year. What has been happening since the "implementation" of the kindergarten cutoff date change, instead, is that junior kindergarteners are placed in the same classroom as kindergarteners, and taught the regular kindergarten curriculum as per directives from those who were in charge of the junior kindergarten program. Moreover, almost all of the junior kindergarteners go on to first grade. Effectively, nothing changed with the passage of the kindergarten entrance cut-off date bill.

According to the former head of the DOE's Test Development, if SB 1278 is faithfully implemented according to its rationale and intent, Hawaii's SAT scores WILL go up significantly. Additionally, the head of the Special Education Branch thinks it very reasonable to assume that our SLD population will decrease because younger students will not likely continue to be misidentified as SLD simply due to their immaturity.

This bill will incur little if any cost to the State of Hawaii because it will bring about two significant changes to the system. 1) Preschool teachers and aides could take the place of teachers for the junior kindergarten program (Junior kindergarten children are 4 year

olds. In most of the rest of the country these children are in preschool classes and taught a preschool curriculum). A preschool teacher and an aide cost about \$7,695 less than the average kindergarten teacher. 2) The number of SLD students will be decreased because there will be very few immature or overplaced students (see attached documentation).

- 1) Junior kindergarten classrooms could be staffed by a preschool teacher and a preschool aide for approximately \$47,305 (average preschool teacher salary \$31,105 + preschool aide (6 hours per day for 180 days at \$15/hour = \$16,200) for a total cost of \$47,305. The cost of a beginning teacher is about \$41,000 but the cost of the typical kindergarten teacher is closer to \$55,000 which would mean a \$7,695 savings per classroom. The cost savings would be the number of junior kindergarten classrooms, 222 X \$7,695 (the difference between the average kindergarten teacher's salary and the cost of a preschool teacher and an aide) = \$1,708,290. This savings would occur each year.
- 2) Additional savings will be realized by the reduction in the number of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) students (see attached SLD chart and projected timeline). Both the Head of the Special Education Branch and DOE budget personnel agree that each SLD student costs the State (conservatively) an additional \$10,000 per year just to become tested and certified and another \$10,000 to instruct, house and monitor. If SB 1278 were implemented, there will be a more balanced distribution of SLD students born in each half of the year. The Director of Special Education agrees that this is a most reasonable expectation. Data from 1998 and 2001 reveal a 24% difference in the SLD population between those born January through July and those born August through December (an average weighted count). That translated to an average of 1,086 more students born during the latter half of the year. They were simply too young and misidentified as SLD.

Data from 12/06/06 show the SLD population at about 9,000. It has not changed significantly from the populations in 1998 and 2001. Extrapolating from the 1998 and 2001 data, there were approximately 4,230 SLD students born between August 1st and December 31st for school year 2006-2007. A conservative estimate (20% rather than 24%) identifies 846 of these students as being simply overplaced rather than actually being SLD students. If SB 1278 is implemented, these 846 students would be in the regular classroom instead of being identified as SLD. Each year after the 13th year from implementation of SB 1278 (when the first Jr. kindergarten class tracked in this manner would have graduated from high school), there will be a savings of at least (\$10,000/SLD student x 864 =) \$8,640,000 (see attached chart for detailed year by year figures).

Although your committee is mainly concerned with the financial impact of this bill, the most important reason for this bill to be passed is to provide our public school students a better platform for academic and lifelong success and the ability to compete with mainland students on nationally normed tests. It is a fundamental change that will bolster the quality and efficacy of our education system. Half measures and compromises will not bring about significant educational improvement of student test scores and achievement. The minimal funding this bill would require (It may not require any additional funds) will pay great educational and life dividends for the students of Hawaii's public school system and provide the State of Hawaii with many more well educated and successful citizens.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean R. Liskum, Ph.D.

Time Line for Jr. Kindergarten/Kindergarten Implementation as proposed in SB 1278

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) Savings

Year of Implementation	SLD students as % of Total Population in Each Grade level, Plus Cumulative Total Percent Each year Of Implementation	Money Saved Calculated at \$10,000/student/year taken as a percent of the total. Using a conservative 20% for over placed students born between 8/1 and 12/31
1 2009	K = .01%	\$8,460
2 2010	2.15% 1 st = 2.15%	\$181,890 \$190,350
3 2011	4.3% 2 nd = 6.4%	\$363,780 \$554,130
4 2012	6.69% 3 rd = 13.33%	\$565,974 \$1,120,104
5 2013	8.95% 4 th = 22.28%	\$757,170 \$1,877,274
6 2014	9.88% 5 th = 32.16%	\$835,848 \$2,713,122
7 2015	10.88% 6 th = 43.04%	\$920,448 \$3,633,570
8 2016	10.56% 7 th = 53.60%	\$893,376 \$4,526,946
9 2017	10.79% 8 th = 64.39%	\$912,834 \$5,439,780
10 2018	12.18% 9 th = 76.57%	\$1,030,428 \$6,470,208
11 2019	9.37% 10 th = 85.94%	\$792,702 \$7,262,910
12 2020	6.64% 11 th = 92.58%	\$561,744 \$7,824,654
13 2021	6.53% 12 th = 99.11%	\$552,438 \$8,377,092

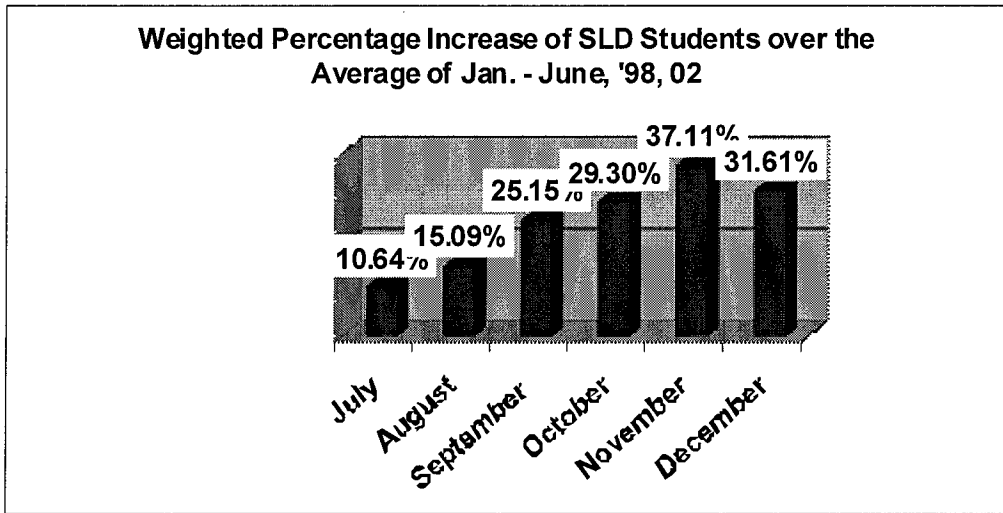
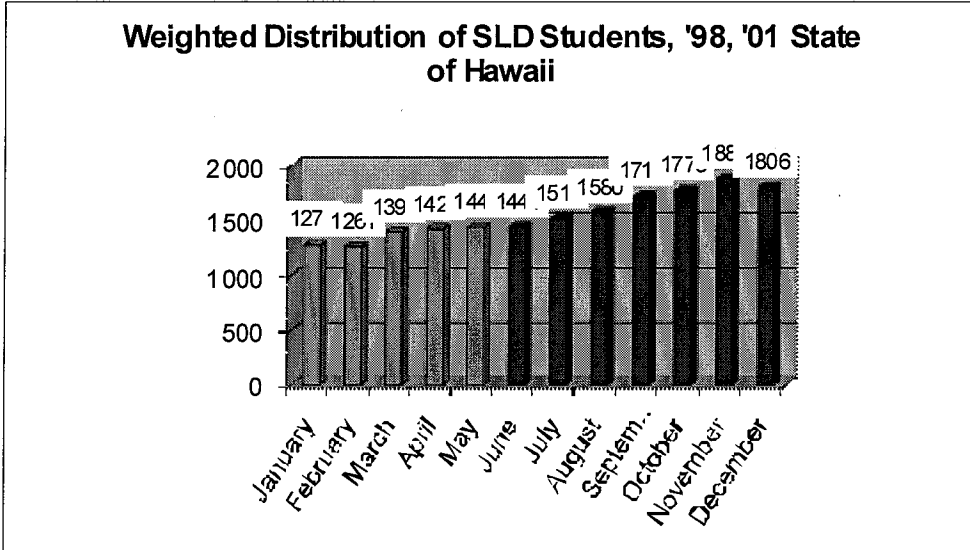
Total Saved over the 13 Year Implementation of SB 1278 \$8,377,092

Each and every year after the thirteenth year of implementation the DOE will save approximately \$8,460,000, based on a conservative added cost of \$10,000/SLD student/year using weighted percentages generated from 1998 and 2001 data and using the 2006-2007 number of 9,000 SLD students. These figures do not take into account the approximately \$10,000 it requires to asses and certify each SLD student. If those students born between August 1st and December 31st are successful they would not need to be tested. The reduction in certification and placement costs would double the amount saved would climb to \$16 million per year. Previous studies indicated an over weighted population of

approximately 24% for those born between July and December. A conservative figure of 20% was used to generate this data.

The above table used DOE SLD data from 1998, 2001 and 2006. Administrative, facilities and other support staff such as regular education teacher and counselor time were not included in the cost which would have added greatly to the calculated savings. This document demonstrates the feasibility of implementing SB 1278 with little or no additional monetary cost to the State.

Weighted Distribution of SLD Students, '98, '01 State of Hawaii



Email Regarding the
Range of Salaries for Preschool Teachers and
Preschool Teacher Aides

Hope this is helpful:

Annual Salary (12 month school year)
Preschool teachers \$24,470.00-\$37,740.00
Preschool aides/assistant: \$13,752.00-18,659.00

KM
Katherine E. Murphy, Executive Director
HAEYC
1806 So. King Street, Ste. 30
Honolulu, HI 96826
808-942-4708 Fax: 808-955-2739
www.hawaiihaeyc.org

> From: Dean Liskum <deanliskum@earthlink.net>
> Date: Mon, 04 Feb 2008 11:55:13 -1000
> To: kmurphy@hawaiihaeyc.org
> Subject: salary
>
> Hi Kathy,
> Please share with me the range of pay for preschool teachers and
> preschool teacher aides.
>
> Aloha, Dean