

SB 1384

SD 1

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Date: 03/01/2011

Committee: Senate Ways and Means

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Kathryn S. Matayoshi, Superintendent of Education

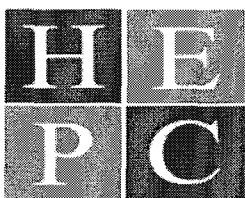
Title of Bill: SB 1384, SD 1 (SSCR 376) Relating to Education

Purpose of Bill: Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, requires children who attend public or private kindergarten programs to be assessed by an early learning educator at the kindergarten prior to entering first grade to ensure the child is qualified to enter the first grade. Requires any assessment conducted by a private kindergarten program to be certified by the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools or the early learning council. Requires children who do not attend kindergarten to be assessed by the department of education prior to entering first grade in a public school.

Department's Position: The Department of Education (Department) does not support SB 1384, SD 1 (SSCR 376). The Department does not support testing children ages 4 to 6 years. The National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) general rule for testing young children is as follows: the purpose of testing must be to improve services for children and ensure that children benefit from their educational experiences. Decisions that have a major impact on children, such as enrollment, retention, or assignment to remedial or special classes, should be based on multiple sources of information and should never be based on a single test score. Assessing all children prior to entering first grade in public schools will pose human resource, time, and fiscal implications for schools and will impact the Department's fiscal priorities. Additionally, young children's inexperience with tests can produce

misleading results (National Council of Teachers of English - NCTE - Resolution on Testing Young Children, 1989). Tests can be particularly misleading when used with very young children who may fully understand the material on the tests but perform poorly due to lack of understanding of the testing procedure, lack of concentration on that particular day, or any number of factors. Assessment of young children needs to be done using a variety of methods and on-going instead of relying on one-time, snapshot views that placement tests provide.

The decision on a child's readiness for grade 1 should be based on each child's progress toward developmental readiness domains that includes social, emotional, intellectual, and physical skills. The decision should also be agreed upon mutually and collaboratively with input and discussion with the school's administrator, classroom teacher, and child's family members.



HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER
Informing the Education Community

Written Comments Presented to the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

March 1, 2011, 9:20 am, Room 211

by

Donald B. Young, Director
Hawai'i Educational Policy Center

SB 1384 SD1: Relating to Education

Chair Ige, Vice Chair Kidani and members of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means

My name is Donald Young. I am providing comments on SB1834, SD1, as Director of the Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC). We respectfully submit the following as input for you to consider in your decision-making process concerning issues concerning early childhood education. HEPC finds this bill problematic for the following reasons.

Section 2. 302A. Entrance to first grade; assessment.

- (a) Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, a child between four and six years of age on or before August 1 of the school year who has attended a kindergarten program pursuant to section 302A-411 or a private kindergarten program shall be assessed prior to entrance to first grade. The assessment shall be conducted by a *qualified teacher with an early childhood education background* to certify that the child is prepared to enter the first grade.

The bill requires that assessments would be made by a 'qualified teacher.' However, as we testified previously, a good proportion of HIDEOE teachers are simply not qualified to assess children who are in early education classrooms. Many have never had education preparation in early childhood development, and often limited, if any, experience teaching in developmentally appropriate ways. Entire kindergarten programs in some schools are without qualified early childhood classroom teachers; thus, cohorts of children will be at-risk of not having appropriate 'assessments.' When an assessment is treated as a single event or 'test' it is an inappropriate use of a process that can result in a child either being retained or pushed ahead. Researchers have linked retention in the early education grades to dropping out (Oakes, J, 2005; Orfield, G. (ed), 2004; Sacks, P., 2007). SD1 also requires that the assessments begin in the 2014-2015 school year. We do not believe the HIDEOE will have adequate numbers of teachers qualified to make assessments for children by that date. A recent study found that children of poverty were more likely to be taught; thus, 'assessed' by inexperienced or unqualified teachers or those teaching outside of their areas of expertise (Education Trust, 2010).

(b) All assessments conducted pursuant to subsection (a) by a private kindergarten program shall be certified by the Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools or the early learning council prior [HAIS or ELC] prior to a child's entrance to the first grade.

We question whether either Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools (HAIS) or the Early Learning Council (ELC) as bodies, are qualified to conduct these assessments, whether the assessment is observational or a paper/pencil test. Observation is a critical component of assessing young children and includes being able to assess social-emotional, physical (bodily-kinesthetic), non-English language speaking, and developmental delays in cognitive and other areas. A blanket assessment ignores developmental ranges in all areas of development among children from four to six years of age. Certifying all assessments conducted by a private kindergarten program would require that HAIS staff and/or ELC individuals would have to observe all of the private school Kindergarten teachers in the state to determine whether they were making developmentally appropriate assessments. In a multi-ethnic state such as Hawai'i, observations are a challenge unless the observer is proficient in a population's language.

(c) Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, as a prerequisite to entering first grade, a child who will be at least five years of age on or before August 1 of the school year who did not attend any type of kindergarten program shall be assessed by qualified department of education personnel to ensure the child is prepared to enter the first grade. Based on the results of the assessment, the child shall be placed in the academically appropriate grade. A child who will be at least 5 on August 1 of the school year, who did not attend any type of K program shall be assessed by the DOE to ensure the child is prepared to enter the first grade.

As stated above, since large numbers of HIDOE Kindergarten teachers are not experienced or qualified for early childhood classroom teaching, it will be difficult for HIDOE to accomplish the required assessments. Inappropriate assessments by unqualified early childhood teachers may lead to tracking, retention and other forms of perceived failure. In addition, children as young as 5 should not be considered for placement in grade 1, unless they have been adequately prepared and are socially and emotionally 'ready.' It is a disservice to children to place them ahead or to practice 'redshirting' or retention. In addition, this section is potentially discriminatory, because it requires that some children be *assessed* prior to entering first grade.

Further problems with this legislation are on p. 3, Section 3 (1): please see statement above, in Section 2(a) regarding the lack of early education teachers who are qualified to assess young children.

Section 3(2): Regarding using formative and summative assessments: again, qualified early education teachers, who understand the use of assessments, are critical. Formative-assessments involve a process primarily for improving instruction and are not appropriate tools for sorting who gains access and who does not. The entire process involves many components including knowing when and how to assess, using appropriate assessment procedures, and making informed judgments about whether results of assessments should lead to adjustments in teaching.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this bill.



Hearing date:
Tuesday, Mar 1,
2011; 9:20 a.m.,
Senate Committee
on Ways and
Means
Room 211

To: Senator David Ige, Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

From: Elisabeth Chun, Executive Director
Good Beginnings Alliance

Date: Tuesday, March 1, 2011, 9:20 a.m.
Conference Room 211

Subject: **SB 1384 SD1: Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, requires children who attend public or private kindergarten programs to be assessed by an early learning educator at the kindergarten prior to entering first grade to ensure the child is qualified to enter the first grade. Requires any assessment conducted by a private kindergarten program to be certified by the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools or the early learning council. Requires children who do not attend kindergarten to be assessed by the department of education prior to entering first grade in a public school. (SD1)**

The Good Beginnings Alliance is a policy and advocacy organization focused on Hawaii's youngest children and their families. We strive to ensure a nurturing, safe and healthy development for all children from pre-birth to age eight. We believe all children deserve safe and supportive environments that meet their needs as they grow and develop. Good Beginnings is also a member of One Voice for Hawaii's Children (www.onevoiceforchildren.net), an alliance of organizations and individuals committed to the development of an effective and equitably funded early childhood system that gives all young children the opportunity to arrive at kindergarten safe, healthy and ready to succeed. The following information is provided to help you in your decision-making process.

We believe all children entering public school should be screened as part of an assessment process to inform instructional planning. This screening must be aligned with standards and developmental expectations as defined by early learning experts. Additionally, the screening data must not be used for placement purposes but to ensure that children's needs are being met through the design of an appropriate curriculum, differentiated instruction and attention to individual needs. The Early Learning Council and the Department of Education should also be tasked to design a statewide plan and process for implementation.

Mahalo for your consideration. For more information contact: Good Beginnings Alliance; phone: 531-5502; Ichun@goodbeginnings.org

From: mailinglist@capitol.hawaii.gov
Sent: Monday, February 28, 2011 11:49 AM
To: WAM Testimony
Cc: threestars@hawaii.rr.com
Subject: Testimony for SB1384 on 3/1/2011 9:20:00 AM

Testimony for WAM 3/1/2011 9:20:00 AM SB1384

Conference room: 211
Testifier position: oppose
Testifier will be present: No
Submitted by: Linda Elento
Organization: Individual
Address:
Phone:
E-mail: threestars@hawaii.rr.com
Submitted on: 2/28/2011

Comments:

I do not support this bill and suggest the following for 302A-411:

1. There should be no reference (directly or implied) to chronological age other than what the current law has provided in 302A-411 (kindergarten attendance): "at least five years of age" and 302A-1132 (compulsory attendance): "all children who will have arrived at the age of at least six years."
2. Children in need of special education must be included, and chronological age appropriateness should not be the goal or criteria but rather based on the unique needs of the child (e.g., what is age-appropriate for a child with Down syndrome may not be what is age-appropriate for a typically-developing child).
3. Funding and requirement (via DOE employees or non-profit organization) for a pre-first grade preparation class (e.g., Mon-Fri 8a-12N for 2 weeks prior to the start of first grade at each public elementary school campus the child will attend). This worked for the Dallas Independent School District (Texas) back in the '70s, and I attended kindergarten at a different school than first grade. Heeia Elementary School (Kaneohe) has had a similar program for 3 weeks for entering kindergartners provided by a non-profit organization.

Thank you for considering my testimony.