Public education in Hawai‘i has the potential power to democratize and make our society more equal, fair, and just. The teacher leaders of the Hawai‘i State Teachers Association think that public education policy should accordingly be designed, developed, and assessed in as democratic a fashion as possible. This report, which emerged from conversations and forums with public school teachers in every chapter and on every island of the state of Hawai‘i, represents the contribution of teachers to the public conversation about public education. We seek to raise awareness about what is happening in our schools and to advocate changes that will restore ola (well-being), lokahi (balance), pono (fairness), and aloha (care) to state education policy in Hawai‘i.

This report is a result of a long process of continuing internal dialogue within our association. In member-to-member forums facilitated through a statewide “listening tour,” teachers engaged in a common process to move from a ‘language of critique’ to a ‘language of hope’ and possibility. In these forums, teacher participants engaged in extended discussion of the problems facing public education, the exacerbation of these issues by the recent education ‘reform’ policies (i.e., No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top), and the possibilities for change presently available. They considered major continuing trends, novel emerging issues, and significant continuities from the past. Teacher participants used this analysis to ‘envision their preferred futures,’ and provided feedback that the state leadership used to develop the shared vision of the association and to determine the most effective strategy to move towards our shared preferred future.

The most important concepts informing this shared vision for our preferred future for public education in Hawai‘i are ola (well-being), lokahi (balance), pono (fairness), and aloha (care). Teachers want schools to promote the development and well-being of the whole student, intellectually, physically, spiritually, and socially (ola). They think that educational policy should be designed around recognition of the vital interdependence and need for balance of all of these aspects of development, within each student and the community as a whole (lokahi). They argued that public education policy should cultivate the individual talents and potential of all students, whatever their circumstances, and respect the roles and responsibilities of those who work with them (pono). And, most importantly, they argued that sound public education policy
should create optimal conditions for students’ development, based on compassion, experience, and practical wisdom (aloha/malama). The “Schools Our Keiki Deserve” campaign is our first step in the effort to realize this vision.

In this shared preferred future, public schools become a primary site of public investment structured around visions of equity and excellence, and the resources and facilities available for learning reflect the high value accorded to the knowledge shared with future generations. There were four main purposes of public education identified by teacher participants: economic, cultural, social, and personal. Educators recognized the importance of enabling students to become economically responsible and independent. Teachers also emphasized the role of public education in helping students understand and appreciate their own cultures and respect the diversity of others. Public education should have a personal impact: it should serve the students themselves, to contribute not simply to their ‘happiness’ but ultimately, to student ‘flourishing’. This redefinition of the purposes of education centers the process on “opening the world to more questions, to deeper uncertainties, to shared and contested meanings, to community engagement, to imagination, action and joy.”[1]

Public schools play a critical role in any kind of democratic political system and should serve as centers of community and collaborative learning. The first implication of this renewed emphasis on the public schools as centers for community building is a shift in the understanding of the purposes of public goods and resources. The purpose of education is to provide opportunities for young people to explore what it means to be fully human. Young people need support and guidance in discovering who they are, as humans, in relation to others, and in exploring different ways of expressing themselves and developing meaningful relationships with the world around them. Young people should be given opportunities to acquire a wider rather than narrower range of skills, because all members of society need a range of knowledge and capacities, broad and deep enough to know how to further that knowledge should they so desire. Public schools in Hawai‘i should educate children so that they can be effective and reasonable participants in public decision-making, and, perhaps most importantly, so that they understand the intrinsic value of intellectual pursuits to serve the ends of life-enhancement.

When the primary desired social good or outcome is the development of human potential rather than economic growth, the entire design of education is transformed. There is a shift in two main areas, the first of which is the desire to learn and willingness to be creatively challenged. With a focus on embracing challenges, students and educators alike build upon their areas of strength and welcome the opportunity to explore areas in which they might not feel as comfortable. As adults, students will need to be able to critically and creatively grapple with overlapping ecological, economic and political crises. A second important capacity that will be developed as a result of this shift is the willingness to use political participation through legal channels to raise questions about social problems and to achieve justice. This is critical as we move towards shared challenges: students need to develop the ability to engage in public reasoning in a spirit of mutual respect and willingness to listen.

The public school teachers of Hawai‘i seek to reclaim public education for public purposes. In the following pages, we attempt to raise awareness about what is happening in our schools and to advocate changes that will restore ola (well-being), lokahi (balance), pono (fairness), and aloha (care) to state education policy in Hawai‘i. But this is just the beginning. Teachers are and have always been powerful advocates on behalf of the young people of our communities and partners with their families. We look forward to continuing to build relationships with our communities to strengthen our public schools, to help create the schools our keiki deserve.
WHOLE CHILD EDUCATION

Our keiki come to school with a diverse set of experiences, talents, cultural knowledge, and questions to be explored. To be authentic and positive places of learning, schools should engage children’s natural curiosity and creativity, and provide students with opportunities to better understand themselves in relation to their local, national, and global communities.

Education Designed to Spark Curiosity and Creativity

All students in Hawai‘i deserve access to a world-class education, not just those of the social and economic elite. At Punahou School, students in the Junior School (K – 8) enjoy the benefits of a sequenced, inquiry-based curriculum, in which students in each grade explore issues of global sustainability. The curriculum features spiraling instruction in language arts, global languages, science, math, social studies, physical education, music, art, technology, and outdoor education, all focused on creativity and critical thinking. At ‘Iolani School, in the new Sullivan Center for Innovation and Leadership (a sustainably-designed 40,000 square foot, four-story facility) students are engaged in project-based inquiry connecting citizenship, applied technology, scientific discovery, and digital communication. This Center includes a fabrication lab, a rooftop garden, a digital media lab, flexible project spaces, collaboration classrooms, and a research lab, all designed to cultivate 21st century learning skills. The curriculum, learning activities, and assessments in these private schools, because they are not constrained by the same ‘accountability’ measures that currently narrow and impoverish the learning possibilities in Hawai‘i public schools, are designed to maximize student curiosity, engagement, and learning.

Implications of the Current Hawai‘i Public School Model

In Hawai‘i public schools, on the other hand, the adoption of ‘standards-based accountability’ measures has had the effect of generally putting far too much emphasis on instruction in preparation for high-stakes standardized testing, narrowly focused on mathematics and language arts. As a result, most of our elementary students now have much more limited learning time and resources devoted to physical education, arts education (music, drama, art, dance, choir, band, etc.), rich and authentic social studies education, Hawaiian studies, library/media instruction, scientific inquiry, or project-based learning designed to cultivate curiosity and creativity. There are, however, culture-based teaching approaches currently being developed in Hawai‘i that support a more holistic vision of education designed to cultivate curiosity, creativity, and connection with the community focused on nurturing strong teachers, integrated teaching, and whole schools. Teachers should be supported in exercising mindfulness that enables them to be fully present for and supportive of their students, rather than being driven by fear of test scores in their decision-making. Integrated teaching “links individual subjects, instructional units, and lessons to their larger meaning; helps students see connections incorporating a variety of instructional approaches,” and whole schools act as “sanctuaries in which students and teachers feel a deep sense of community and acceptance.”

Current Socio-Economic Contextual Challenges

Attentiveness to the ‘whole child’ requires not only a broadening of the curriculum but also a willingness to examine the particular struggles faced by the students in our public schools. Although the particular expression of these struggles varies across the state, HIDOE students in public schools generally come from less privileged ethnic and social class backgrounds than their counterparts in private schools: a full 52% of the student population in Hawai‘i public schools come from ‘economically disadvantaged’ households, those which meet the income eligibility guidelines for free or reduced-price meals (less than or equal to 185% of Federal Poverty Guidelines). Hawai‘i public schools serve students from a unique blend of races, cultures, and experiences. In school year 2013-2014, Native Hawaiians constituted the largest group of students in the Hawai‘i public school system, making up 26% of the population, while Filipino Americans made up 22%, whites 17%, Japanese Americans 9%, Micronesians 4%, Latinos 3.8%, Samoans 3.5% and Chinese Americans 3.2%; our HIDOE teaching population, on the other hand, is primarily white and Japanese-American. Addressing the social justice implications of this disparity will require that we take seriously the importance of ‘growing our own teachers’ within our communities, young leaders who understand and want to serve their communities.

While there are differences within and between these groups of students, there are also important social indicators that suggest that our failure to attend to the ‘whole child’ does not serve us well as a community. Taken together, students of Hawaiian, Filipino, and other Pacific Islander descent make up the majority, about 55%, of our public school students. These same groups of students are extremely underrepresented at the major institution of higher education in Hawai‘i, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. Moreover, according to the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, conducted every two years by the Center for Disease Control, the students in Hawai‘i public schools report persistent and increasingly trenchant problems of poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, obesity, drug and alcohol abuse, bullying, and sexual exploitation.
Without approaching education in a more holistic fashion, we cannot hope to address these physical, social, and economic barriers to learning.

Given the history of these islands, our public schools should be places that feel uniquely Hawaiian, reflecting the rich history and cultures that make our islands different than anywhere else in the world. Children should have the opportunity to learn about Polynesian and Hawaiian cultural traditions and actively practice Hawaiian language, arts, and customs. Our state constitution acknowledges the importance of Hawaiian language and culture, and we need to ensure that our public schools actually preserve and promote the language and culture of this place. Doing so in ways that helps students in our very ethnically diverse society connect with their own cultures and social identities, accepting and celebrating students for who they are – as opposed to what they do – is integrally related to the idea of teaching the ‘whole child.’ And while it is critical that our approach to education reflect the host culture, we also need to foster culturally relevant education for all of our students, a pedagogical approach grounded in teachers’ display of cultural competence and skill at teaching in a cross-cultural or multicultural setting, enabling each and every student to relate course content to his or her cultural context, which produces significant benefits for all students.

Culture-Based Education and Culturally Relevant Education

Given the history of these islands, our public schools should be
Hawai‘i’s public schools serve many vulnerable groups of young people, including economically disadvantaged students, students with special needs and English Language Learners. While about 13% of the total student population (about 180,000 students) falls into more than one group, students from these three groups taken together make up a solid majority, or 56%, of our student population.[1] About 52%, or 92,808, of our students are economically disadvantaged; 10%, or 17,373, of our students have special needs; and about 8%, or 13,883, of our students are English Language Learners (ELL).[2] If public education is to be a space in which we can restore ola (well-being), lokahi (balance), pono (fairness), and aloha (care), we need to begin by addressing the needs of those students who are most vulnerable.

**Special Education**

Special education instruction meets the unique needs of students with disabilities. Special education services include academic, speech-language, psychological, physical and occupational, and counseling accommodations. Governed by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) and state regulations requiring the Hawai‘i State Department of Education to provide a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to eligible students, special education services are made available to any student aged 3 to 22 who demonstrates a need for specially designed instruction.[3]

Despite reform efforts over the past fifteen years, special education in Hawai‘i requires additional support. Most students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) in Hawai‘i public schools are performing below grade level in reading and mathematics as measured by statewide assessments. While most of the public policy attention to these students has been focused on the psychologically widening ‘achievement gap’ between special education students and their general education peers, teachers of special needs students are often much more concerned about the psychological effects that the ‘toxic testing’ culture has had on these students, and the ways in which students’ fundamental sense of humanity and self-worth are increasingly undermined by our highly pressurized and hypercompetitive public school culture.

In some HIDOE schools, as many as a third of our students have individual education plans (IEPs). Special education teachers are often overburdened with paperwork, lack adequate time to complete individualized education plan (IEP) tasks, and lack sufficient funds for learning materials and equipment.

**English Language Learners**

According to the 2010 U.S. Census survey, over 25% of the population in Hawai‘i speak a language other than English, and the majority of people immigrating to Hawai‘i come from Asia and the Pacific Islands. The top five foreign languages spoken by Hawai‘i public school students are Ilokano, Chuukese, Marshallese, Tagalog, and Spanish.[4] Hawai‘i public school educators have been struggling with inadequate support and the impossible challenge of asking their students to be prepared for high-stakes testing. This issue requires the attention of policy makers.
Federal law requires programs that educate children with limited English proficiency be 1) based on a sound educational theory; 2) adequately supported, with adequate and effective staff and resources so that the program has a realistic chance of success; and 3) periodically evaluated and, if necessary, revised.[5] In that vein, recent community discussions around multilingualism could help provide a way to strengthen the educational methods used with English Language Learners. This work is based on the premise that there is strength in the diverse multicultural and multilingual students we serve in Hawai‘i, inasmuch as students who are English Language Learners are potentially multilingual learners who may have first languages other than or in addition to English, capacities which should be used as resources for their educational success.

This approach effectively seeks to fulfill the mandates of federal law by “providing program guidance to promote academic achievement, English language development, and personal growth for multilingual learners, which supports preparation for college, career and community contribution,” building upon the pedagogical “advantages of multilingualism for equitable and quality education” by using the home language for content learning while developing English language abilities. This shift in education policy to one better grounded in educational theory still requires substantial additional funding so that it is adequately supported with adequate and effective staff and resources for a realistic chance of success. This approach is already being explored by some of Hawai‘i’s most transformational teachers and can be used to help students explore their diverse backgrounds and different ways of making meaning.[6]

It is also critical that this movement be connected to a more holistic analysis of the current state of public education in Hawai‘i, and coupled with a vision for the future based on cooperation, creativity, trust-based responsibility, professionalism, and equity.
Research conducted by the Institute of Education Sciences, within the U.S. Department of Education, concludes that “class size reduction is one of only four evidence-based reforms that have been proven to increase student achievement.”[1] Experiments in Tennessee, Wisconsin, and other states have demonstrated that students in smaller classes have higher academic achievement, receive better grades, and exhibit improved attendance. Moreover, the students benefiting the most from smaller class sizes are from poor and minority backgrounds, and they experience twice the achievement gains of the average student when they are placed in smaller classes. A study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education analyzed the achievement of students in 2,561 schools across the nation by their performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) exams. After controlling for student background, the only objective factor that correlated with higher test scores was class size.[2]

**Class Size Matters for All Grade Levels**

Reducing class size drastically affects student learning positively, especially with younger students in grades K-3, as shown by the well-known Tennessee Project STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio) that included smaller class sizes.[3] In addition, it has also been shown that reduced class size has particularly positive effects on secondary students who are performing at lower levels. If placed in larger class sizes, these lower achieving students continue to perform at low levels and their achievement levels actually decline in larger class settings. If these lower achieving students are placed in larger classes, they tend to have off-task behaviors that interfere with their learning. Teachers then spend the majority of their time redirecting student behavior, instead of focusing on important instruction. When these lower achieving secondary students are placed in smaller classes, their academic progress and achievement dramatically increase; and, if they remain in lower class sizes, they continue to make great gains in their achievement over an extended period of time.[4]

**Class Size and Teaching**

A smaller class size allows teachers to be able to use a variety of pedagogical approaches more effectively as well as provide more individualized instruction and deeper teacher feedback while also improving students’ non-cognitive skills such as engagement and attentiveness, contributing to higher graduation rates and fewer dropping out of school.[5] Another point that should not be overlooked is that smaller class sizes allow teachers to develop stronger connections with students and more frequent communication with their families. School connectedness is vital for student success.[6]

**Class Size in Our Local Context**

The student-teacher ratios that are listed for each Hawai‘i Department of Education school represent the total number of students enrolled at a school divided by the total number of teachers at a school. It is important to note that the number of teachers included in this ratio include non-classroom teacher positions, such as registrars, librarians, curriculum coordinators, curriculum coaches, and counselors. In reality, class size should refer to the actual number of students on a teacher’s roster for a particular class, not a ratio or average. For example, at a middle school, the student-teacher ratio might state that it is 15-to-1, but their actual class size at that particular middle school might be from 30-35 students, or more, depending on the class. There are also special education classes that should be smaller, due to the needs of the special education students. Although there is a class size limit for grades K-2 of 25 students in Hawai‘i, there is no clear limit established for class sizes in grades 3-12. For example, at Campbell High School, there are often classes in core academic subjects of 40 or more students in class. At the secondary level, teachers currently instruct 6 classes in the state of Hawai‘i. This means their teaching load, if each class consists of 30-35 students, is a total of 180-210 students (or more, if they have 40 students in each class, such as the classes at Campbell High School).

Setting a limit of a class size of 20 students for grades K-3 and a limit of 26 students for grades 4-12, as recommended by Hawai‘i Board of Education Policy 2237, is an integral step necessary to support student learning. It is needed to increase student achievement, to improve attendance rates, contribute to student connectedness, reduce off-task behaviors, and generally provide a better learning environment for all students to be successful.

**Class Size is a Social Justice Issue**

A smaller class size is one of the top priorities for Hawai‘i students and families. Setting limits on class sizes ensures that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential.
Our keiki deserve robust vocational education paths to rewarding careers. Recent national public education ‘reform’ efforts under No Child Left Behind, and more specifically, Hawai’i’s involvement in Obama’s Race to the Top initiative, have had the effect of marginalizing and even gutting career and technical education (CTE) programs in Hawai’i as schools have redirected their limited resources to fulfilling the educational reform agenda of raising scores on standardized tests.[1]

Effects of Education Reform on Career and Technical Education

There is a unified concern among Career and Technical Education (CTE) constituents in Hawai’i (teachers, industry experts, and employers) about continued negative effects of federal legislation because no area of CTE (agriculture; business, marketing, and computer; family and consumer sciences; health occupations; or technology, trade and industry education) was discussed at any length in either No Child Left Behind (NCLB) or in the more recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).[2] As a result of the shift in emphasis to accountability measures that focus on scores in high stakes standardized tests, secondary schools across the state, mirroring the national trend, have utilized funding normally set aside for CTE programs to improve students’ performance in areas directly mentioned in the legislation, in order to meet accountability requirements, devoting more instructional time and curriculum attention to English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics.[3]

Because a majority of all current job openings, both locally and nationally, are for positions that do not require college, the rhetoric of education reform that emphasizes college while minimizing the possibilities of other pathways does students a grave disservice.[4] Families in our communities value the goal of a college education, but in Hawai’i, job projections by the Hawai’i Department of Labor show that overall, more than 72% of the state’s projected job openings through 2022 require only a high school diploma or less. About 15% of the future openings will require a Bachelor’s degree and another 3% will need an Associate’s degree. The prerequisite for less than 2% of all openings will be a Master’s degree, while another 2% will require a Doctoral or Professional degree for employment.[5] While these projections are based on a continuation of the existing economic model, it is not clear that our definition of meaningful and productive work in society should be limited to that which requires a college degree. If the end of poverty and social inequality are genuinely desired by those who advocate education reform, then there should be strong support by all parties for measures which unequivocally address social inequality, such as more egalitarian tax measures and an increase in the minimum wage.
Impact on Economic Security

The current imbalance in educational direction is contributing to deepening economic insecurity for our young people. Not only do current state and federal education policies overemphasize the importance of the attainment of college degrees at the expense of supporting students in a multitude of pathways, but they also contribute to a social and economic situation that impoverishes young people. Students are strongly encouraged to attend college at all costs so that schools can improve their college attendance rate without regard to the wisdom of that imperative. As a result, many young people are becoming mired in debt, with “six out of ten college graduates incurring an average of $30,000 in student loan debt.”[6] Underemployment, a situation faced by far too many of our young people, can be crippling to a young adult’s finances if he or she cannot find full-time employment within six months of graduating from college, when most loan repayment is scheduled to begin. According to a national study, “more people than ever before are earning college degrees, and as many as 39% of people under 25 are unemployed or underemployed,” and according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, nearly “8 percent of those under the age of 25 who have a four-year degree cannot find a job at all.”[7] In Hawai’i, that statistic is thought to be even higher.[8] “Career education in too many of our secondary schools reflects an outdated model… developing teachers who can work at the intersection of disciplines. Attracting these instructors to apply for teaching positions in our public schools has been a challenge, according to Michael Barros, head of Hawai’i’s Department of Education Career and Technical Education programs.[10] Offering teachers salaries worthy of their professional status will attract high-quality instructors to CTE programs in the public school, and reducing the onerous and irrational current teacher evaluation requirements will further assist in attracting and retaining valuable CTE instructors. Moreover, instructors moving straight into teaching, without training or experience in working with adolescents and their parents, should be provided with mentoring, support, and appropriate, yet flexible, professional development to help them develop their skills and gain teacher certification.

Hawai’i, like most states, is “working toward the goal of getting their students ‘college-and career-ready,’” but CTE experts are concerned that “what we mean by ‘career-ready’ is not always clear, and the supply of quality career-technical education programs has not kept pace with demand.”[11] It is currently impractical, especially with such sharply limited funding for public education, that all high schools establish and maintain expensive facilities and infrastructure with technical equipment that will require modernization over time. Community colleges in Hawai’i, on the other hand, are poised to become the center for partnerships in vocational training.[12]

Vocational Education

[resulting in an] increasingly pronounced skills gap that plagues American businesses as they struggle to find qualified workers and dead ends for our students who rely on career preparation programs as their ticket into the middle class.”[9] When we coerce all students to follow a narrow pathway to a four-year college without regard to student preference and personal vision, we unjustly put them in competition for fewer jobs, force them to incur unreasonable and insurmountable debt, and contribute to the creation of a shortage in Hawai’i’s workforce of individuals prepared for a majority of socially and economically critical jobs.

Restoring Balance in the Educational System

Hawai’i’s Career and Technical Education programs need to be expanded to provide greater opportunity to prepare young people to design their own futures. This will require attracting and retaining qualified instructors in many vocational fields and with solid introductory courses to various professions and strong vocational counseling provided by high schools, our secondary school system can and should serve as catalysts to post-secondary vocational training both on-the-job and in community colleges and trade schools. Students must have several options available to them in order to explore creative expression, academic excellence, and practical plans for their future. Vocational counseling efforts must be improved to help students see the opportunities of vocational pathways. According to a national study, “only 25 percent of polled job seekers reported receiving career pathing in high school, and 41 percent said they wished they had received more guidance.”[13] Adequate provision of skilled and knowledgeable high school counselors is essential to support individualized student planning of coursework. Because of the unique geographical challenges among the public high schools in Hawai’i, the variety of programs available at each school should be decided upon by a collaborative effort of the community and school officials, so that they effectively meet individual student and community needs.
Our keiki deserve, at the very least, school facilities that have adequate lighting, clean air, comfortable heating and cooling, properly-insulated windows that open and close, roofs that do not leak, classrooms large enough to move around in (for projects and group work), cafeterias, library media centers, functioning plumbing in bathrooms, computer labs, science labs, auditoriums with chairs, and fresh paint.[1] There is a growing body of work linking educational achievement and student performance to the quality of learning environment in which students and teachers spend the majority of their waking hours.[2] Learning spaces have become a critical social justice issue, and many researchers and advocates in Hawai‘i and across the country are concerned about the disproportionate effect of unhealthy public school facility conditions on students from racial or ethnic minority groups and from families having lower socio-economic status.[3]

Adults seek out air-conditioned spaces for work and leisure during increasingly hot days, yet we subject our children to sweltering conditions that not only make learning far less likely but also, more importantly, pose an imminent threat to the health of students and teachers alike.
Investigations linking indoor air quality, lighting, ventilation, and temperature to student learning have emerged over the past three decades and have produced clear results: facilities not conducive to human health make teachers and students sick - sick students and teachers cannot perform as well as healthy ones.[4] Specifically, poor air quality, weak or overly intense fluorescent lighting, lack of adequate ventilation, and extreme classroom temperatures in Hawai‘i, as in classrooms in the other dramatically underfunded school districts around the country, have been associated with increased student absenteeism, less productive learning environments, student dissatisfaction, alienation, and poor educational performance. This scholarship supports the sensible inference that physical environments (which include seating, furnishings, spatial density, privacy, noise and acoustics, windowless classrooms, vandalism, and playgrounds) have a dramatic effect on students’ engagement, attainment, attendance, and well-being.[5]

Some of the most important insights about the connections between place, space and learning include:

Temperature, heating, and air quality are the most important individual elements for student achievement.[6]

Chronic noise exposure impairs cognitive functioning, with a number of studies finding noise-related reading problems, deficiencies in pre-reading skills, more general cognitive deficits, and higher stress levels for students.[7]

Classroom lighting plays a particularly critical role in student performance: appropriate lighting improves test scores, reduces off-task behavior, and plays a significant role in students’ achievement. [8]

With school buildings that are aging rapidly and in distressingly poor repair, the environmental issues facing the islands have an intensified impact on our unprotected children.[16] Air quality issues for students include vog and exposure to pollutants from pesticides being sprayed on or near campuses.[17] With poor ventilation, these irritants and pollutants are often either trapped inside the classroom or kept out by eliminating all airflow in classrooms without air conditioning, creating a stiflingly hot and toxic environment for the students. The manifestations of climate change, including increasingly high temperatures for longer periods of the year and dramatic climate events, leave our children the most vulnerable.[18] Adults seek out air-conditioned spaces for work and leisure during increasingly hot days, yet we subject our children to sweltering conditions that not only make learning far less likely but also, more importantly, pose an imminent threat to the health of students and teachers alike.[19]

It is in the public charter schools, however, that the children and teachers have the least physical support because they have not been receiving funding for facilities despite the fact that they are public and not private charter schools. Although Hawai‘i law now allows the Charter School Commission to request facilities funding as part of its annual budget request to the director of finance, and it may receive, expend, or allocate any funds provided by the facilities funding request beginning with fiscal year 2014–15, the legislature has not been providing funding for facilities costs.[20] There are multiple public charter schools across the state that lack adequate building space, who have to conduct class outdoors, on covered lanais, or in makeshift structures.[21] Public charter schools are forced to spend time and energy seeking funds for facilities from outside sources instead of focusing on student learning. Some of these public charter schools were established in remote, rural areas, and they exist because the state has simply never constructed a public school to meet the needs of the growing populations of the area.[22] The perpetuation of these conditions is unconscionable – our keiki deserve better.
Nearly one in six schools in Hawai‘i is rural, and these small, rural schools serve over 8,500 students. Our students in small and rural schools require more focused attention and policy-making because the students in these schools are generally more vulnerable with fewer social and economic supports. Despite median household incomes close to the national median, persistent rural adult unemployment remains a concern in Hawai‘i.[1] Rural household mobility in Hawai‘i is very high, at almost 15%, and national analysis reveals that children of all racial-ethnic groups are more likely to live in poverty if they live in a rural place than if they live in either an urban or suburban place.[2] In rural areas of Hawai‘i, over 40% of families with children from ages 0-5 are below the poverty line, and over 75% of single mother families with children from ages 0-5 are below the poverty line.[3] This is a critical issue for education policy in Hawai‘i because research suggests that experiencing poverty before age 18 is particularly harmful and has implications for brain development as well as educational, occupational, health, and family consequences.[4] While developing policies to reduce poverty rates is the more holistic approach, because it can reduce overall societal costs and improve outcomes for individuals and families, we can begin by buffering our children in rural areas from the most brutal effects of this poverty and lack of stability in multiple ways.[5]

Basic Staffing

Policymakers first need to fund rural schools in ways that are at least sufficient to support basic educational goals. Our keiki in less populated rural areas deserve quality school opportunities, and to strengthen the educational institutions in rural areas, every school should be adequately staffed to provide a solid educational foundation with counselors, librarians, and elective teachers. To do this, we will need to increase the differentials for rural schools and decrease financial incentives designed to reward increases in school size, as a wide body of research shows the small schools generally yield better learning outcomes.[6]

Weighted Student Formula

In the past few years, with the support of federal funds, Hawai‘i has embarked on a focused campaign to improve education for its most disadvantaged students. This includes the establishment of Zones of School Improvement and the creation of the Weighted Student Formula (WSF) under the Reinventing Education Act of 2004. WSF was intended to make funding for public education more equitable, transparent, and decentralized. However, the academic opportunities available to children in rural and small schools has been dramatically limited by the unintended effects of this funding mechanism. A recent report commissioned by the Hawai‘i Department of Education and completed by the American Institutes of Research (AIR) reveals that “small or isolated schools do not have adequate funding under the WSF and that WSF does not account adequately for diseconomies of scale associated with small schools or for additional costs due to geographic isolation.”[7] Lack of funding is a major challenge, especially for small schools that “need to support essential personnel,” and small schools and those in geographically remote locations were “especially lacking sufficient funding to cover much more than a minimally operating program.”[8] Other factors that have cost implications for operating schools need to be taken into account, such as the inability of “necessarily small” schools to take advantage of the economies of scale associated with operating larger schools. More isolated communities lack wider and deeper alternative funding sources. Lack of opportunity is more pronounced in rural areas, due to distance from services, and rural communities and families in poverty have less access to technology. The American Institutes for Research suggest that “extra support” be provided for schools that are small or isolated.[9] This requires a reconsideration of the weighting factors that make up the WSF so that they more “accurately account for the differential costs of providing an equal opportunity for all students to achieve, regardless of their individual needs or circumstances (such as geographic location).”[10]
Teacher Staffing

There are a number of issues connected to teacher staffing in rural schools. Rural schools in Hawai‘i serve children with high needs who require additional resources, special programs, and expert teachers to be successful learners. Class size in Hawai‘i’s rural public schools is above average for rural schools nationally. Geographers have noted differences in resource prices, especially with respect to staff, so that not all rural schools are able to attract and retain qualified staff. Rural schools in Hawai‘i are generally “hard-to-staff” with highly qualified teachers, tend to have high rates of teacher turnover and out-of-field teaching assignments, and frequently use substitutes to fill vacancies or assign out-of-field teachers, thereby failing to place a qualified teacher in each classroom. While there is currently a bonus for teaching at hard-to-staff schools, the authors of the AIR report question whether it “is large enough to fully adjust for this cost factor.”

Using the Weighted Student Formula mechanism, small rural schools are less likely to have counselors, librarians, and a wide choice of electives. Fewer than 30 percent of schools on the Big Island have school librarians, and most of those schools are urban.

Fairness, grounded in a strong sense of what is pono, requires that we provide, at the very least, equality of learning opportunities for our children. Hawai‘i is first in the nation in terms of the percent of students of color in rural schools. NAEP performance in Hawai‘i’s rural areas for 2013-2014 is lower than in nearly all other states, with the absolute lowest score in fourth grade reading. Hawai‘i ranks in the lowest overall quartile, with the lowest rural NAEP scores, on all four NAEP indicators, both 4th and 8th grade in both reading and math. Many of these challenges of providing equal educational opportunities in rural and small schools in Hawai‘i can be addressed if our first principle is that all of our keiki deserve the very best education we can offer them. This principle will require that policymakers return to the mechanisms used to allocate resources and not only find additional funding for all public schools, but also use existing resources to more equitably support our small, rural schools, which could have a profound effect on stabilizing remote communities and contribute to a more sustainable Hawai‘i.
Good education starts with good teachers, and our keiki in Hawai‘i deserve the best. However, difficulties in the retention of existing qualified teachers and recruitment of the next generation of qualified teachers has reached crisis proportions, as the number of teachers leaving their classrooms has been rising dramatically over the past five years. The number of annual vacancies presents a serious problem – every year at least 10% of all teachers leave Hawai‘i schools. This number is one of the highest in the country (the national average is 6.8%), and these high teacher attrition rates come at a high price.[1] Richard Ingersoll, a University of Pennsylvania professor whose work centers on teacher retention, estimated that filling all the vacancies could have cost Hawai‘i up to $13 million in 2008. This means that teacher turnover costs from 2008 to 2014 could have amounted to almost $70 million.[2]

**Teacher Shortage Crisis: Impact on Students**

Unfortunately, the real cost of teacher attrition is paid not by the state but our students.[3] So many educators leave the classroom every year that teacher preparation programs in the state of Hawai‘i cannot keep up with the demand for new teachers.[4] This forces the state to recruit
teachers from the mainland (more than half of new teachers who have completed a Teacher Education Program have obtained their degrees from out-of-state institutions) and alternative teaching pipelines, such as Teach for America (TFA), who are less likely to stay in the classroom.

Every year, hundreds of vacancies are filled with emergency hires and substitute teachers who often lack the appropriate training to facilitate student success in the classroom. For the 2015-2016 school year, there were 1,210 open positions statewide for teachers. Of those 1,210, 584 were hired under the designation of “emergency hire” (a teacher that has not yet complete a State Approved Teacher Education Program (SATEP)). This includes all entering Teach for America teachers (98 in 2013-2014), which is projected to decline as TFA, too, has seen a large drop in enrollment over the past two years.

The students who suffer the most attend schools that already have a hard time filling their open positions because their schools are remote, rural, or struggling with poverty, crime, alienation and disaffection. Beginning and inexperienced teachers are those most likely to leave, creating a perpetual “revolving door” that has a profoundly negative effect on student learning and school community building. Of the teachers who leave the DOE each year, 60% resign (30% retire and 10% are terminated). “What we have is a retention crisis,” says National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future commission President Tom Carroll. The greatest problem is retaining teachers because of high levels of attrition. Over 40 percent of new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. Pouring more teachers into the system will not solve the retention problem. “As fast as [districts] are moving teachers into schools, they’re leaving,” Carroll says. When almost 70% of new teachers hired each year have no previous teaching experience, and research shows that teachers only become fully effective after four or five years of classroom experience, the implications of our inability to retain qualified teachers for students, student learning and school community-building become clear.

**Sources of the Teacher Retention Problem**

The most glaring source of the teacher retention problem is pay. Those entering the teaching profession suffer from a “teacher pay penalty” nationally – similar college-educated workers in other professions out-earn their teacher counterparts significantly. On average, teachers earn 13% less than they would in a different vocation. The high cost of living in Hawai‘i creates an even more challenging economic situation for teachers. With highest food, gas, and rent prices in the country, teachers’ salaries are often literally unsustainable for young teachers, who often need to pay off their student loans as well. Almost 50% of college students in Hawai‘i graduate with an average debt of $25,000, and about 50% of new teachers hired each year are between 21 and 30 years old, so that far too many young HIDOE teachers suffer from such heavy college debt burden that they have to get second jobs.

Hawai‘i’s teachers are not only poorly compensated when they start – their future outlook is also quite bleak. In Hawai‘i, teachers who stay in the classroom see very little pay growth over time. Teachers with 10 years of experience earn merely 9% more than teachers with no experience whatsoever (in comparison, nationwide, teachers with 10 years of classroom experience on average enjoy 28% higher pay than beginning teachers). This appalling lack of upward mobility continues to erode the appeal of the teaching profession and forces many veteran teachers to look for jobs elsewhere. Because the Hawai‘i Department of Education only considers a maximum of six years of teaching experience from non-DOE teachers (i.e. charter, private, and out-of-state) for salary placement purposes, many experienced teachers would face major pay cuts in order to teach in Hawai‘i’s public schools.

This policy, coupled with extraordinarily low mid-career teacher salaries and the high cost of living in Hawai‘i, effectively prevents schools from keeping and recruiting experienced teachers.

**Beyond Pay**

Poor working conditions, going beyond dangerously overheated classrooms and dilapidated facilities to include deprofessionalization and loss of teacher autonomy and voice, are accelerating this attrition rate. In a recent interview on NPR, Bill McDiarmid, Dean of the University of North Carolina School of Education, points to the erosion of teaching’s image as a stable career. “There’s a growing sense...that K-12 teachers simply have less control over their professional lives in an increasingly bitter, politicized environment....

The list of potential headaches for new teachers is long, starting with the ongoing, ideological fisticuffs over the Common Core State Standards, high-stakes testing and efforts to link test results to teacher evaluations.” A November 2014 National Education Association survey reported that nearly 50 percent of all teachers are considering leaving due to standardized testing. Teaching has been dramatically deprofessionalized, with teachers too often scapegoated by politicians, policymakers, foundations and the media. This is due largely to the radical change in the education landscape in recent years, with No Child Left Behind as just one “particularly brutal manifestation of the anti-teacher, anti-education mindset.”

**Beginning to Grapple with the Problem**

While the policy makers in Hawai‘i will need to muster strong support for public education to address these issues, there are clear strategies to create maximal positive impact. The first set of strategies should immediately create learning environments in which adults are compensated properly for their work, where “teachers are not blamed for every manifestation of social problems, and where meaningless tests given for the sake of accountability” do not dominate the school year. The second set of strategies will require foresight and commitment to social justice in public education, with policies designed to increase the attractiveness and appeal of the teaching profession for talented young people from our own communities with college debt forgiveness programs, better salary schedules that reward commitment to the profession, opportunities for professional advancement, and marked improvements to the teaching environment.
ENDING HIGH-STAKES TESTING
Since No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was enacted in 2001, Hawai‘i schools have gradually been forced to shift their focus from teaching to testing. Although it may not have been the intention, teachers have spent more and more class time preparing their students for tests, and much less time engaging in rich and meaningful instruction that does not pertain directly to the narrow goal of achieving a desired test score.\[1\] The precise impact of standardized testing has no doubt differed from school to school, grade-level to grade-level, classroom to classroom. Such variation is based on many factors, including school demographics and the relative ability of faculties and administrative teams to withstand or curb the negative impact of corrosive assessment practices. Despite such variation, there now exists a clear consensus among educators in Hawai‘i and across the U.S. that the overall effect of testing on public schools and public school culture has been detrimental if not devastating.

**Negative Impact of the Common Core State Standards**

Many educators were initially enthusiastic about the now famous Common Core State Standards (CCSS), as the new standards seemed to grant educational consistency from state to state and were reportedly more “rigorous” than previous state standards documents. Enthusiasm quickly waned, however, as it became apparent that, in the words of one recent commentator, CCSS had come “shrink-wrapped” \[2\] with a pair of highly complicated and expensive testing systems (the Smarter Balanced Assessment and the PARCC Assessment) from which states were to choose. It appeared that schools would be devoting even more time to standardized testing than before, when states were free to develop their own tests.

**Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the NCLB replacement signed into law in December of 2015, states will be required to maintain standardized testing but will be granted considerable leeway regarding what the tests will look like, how they will be implemented, and the uses to which data collected from them will be put.**
The final turn of the screw took place in 2012 when Hawai‘i received the $75 million Race to the Top (RTTT) grant. To qualify for the grant, states had to agree to evaluate teachers based on their performance. Similar to evaluation systems in other RTTT states, the Educator Effectiveness System (EES) was developed in order to satisfy this requirement. Teachers’ ratings would reflect their students’ scores on the new tests, and these ratings would determine pay raises as well as job continuance, despite considerable research showing that teachers’ impact on student performance on standardized tests is minimal.

Indeed, research has placed heavy doubt on the so-called “value-added method,” or VAM, used in Hawai‘i to calculate teacher effectiveness: “[T]he tests used for calculating VAM are not particularly able to detect differences in the content or quality of classroom instruction.”[3] Furthermore, the American Statistical Association has established that the VAM formulas fail to determine effectiveness “with sufficient reliability and validity.”[4] The same teacher can receive wildly fluctuating results from year to year. VAM scores are currently being used as part of EES to evaluate teachers who do not even teach, and have never taught, the students currently being assessed.

The impact of the adoption of this faulty evaluation process by the Hawai‘i DOE has been a widespread drop in teacher morale, as teachers recognize that they are not being evaluated in a way that is fair or reliable. The other outcome, of course, has been an even more narrow and rigid focus on testing in Hawai‘i public schools. The adoption of Educator Effectiveness System, which links student test scores to teacher evaluation through the now widely delegitimated “value-added method” (VAM), have virtually guaranteed that many teachers, in order to maintain their rating as “effective” (as opposed to “marginal” or “unsatisfactory”), and even survive as teachers, feel that they must compromise their professional integrity and decision-making by “teaching to the test.”

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1. Minimize the amount of time devoted to standardized tests. This will involve re-examining our current commitment to use of the Smarter Balanced Assessment, which is expensive, time-consuming, and of doubtful quality.[5]

2. Seriously question the many uses to which data from the Smarter Balanced Assessment is currently being put, including Strive HI, which the Department of Education touts as “a diagnostic tool to understand a school’s performance and progress…
and differentiate schools based on their individual needs for reward, support and intervention,”[6] but which unfairly ranks schools from best to worst - a ranking that is based heavily on the highly questionable data from the Smarter Balanced tests.

3. Remove the barriers that are currently preventing teachers from making the best decisions for their students. This entails not only a thorough reexamination of the standardized testing currently in place, but also a rethinking of the tremendously time-consuming teacher evaluation system currently in place – a “top-down” system that teachers have almost unanimously decried as wasteful, misguided, and professionally insulting.

4. Grant teachers the critical autonomy and professional dignity, both to work collaboratively to devise the formative assessment methods and practices best suited to their particular students, and to determine the fittest methods for evaluating their own professional performance.

5. Support teachers with the funds and resources they need to reestablish an educational culture that consists of a well-rounded curriculum and an approach to assessment that, rather than ranking, promoting, and penalizing teachers and schools according to narrow and mismeasured parameters, serves the goals to which sound assessment has always been put – namely, understanding what students have and haven’t learned from instruction and adjusting that instruction accordingly.

6. Support the rights of parents in determining how their children spend the school day. Parents must be allowed to opt-out or refuse standardized testing and demand their children receive an education that is focused on real learning and that truly prepares them for a better future. Furthermore, the Board and Department of Education must inform parents of their rights to refuse standardized testing without fear of penalty to or retaliation against students, parents, teachers, and schools.

Genuine School Reform

As educational historian and critic Diane Ravitch has written, “Genuine school reform must be built on hope, not fear; on encouragement, not threats . . . on belief in the dignity of the human person, not a slavish devotion to data; on support and mutual respect, not a regime of punishment and blame.”[7] Hawai‘i public schools have too long languished in a system that has generated fear, employed threats, and assigned blame to teachers, seriously affecting the decisions of teachers and principals and casting a gloom that has become pervasive in schools, ultimately affecting our students and their families. It is now time for us to reverse the damage done through “slavish devotion” to bad data coming from mediocre tests. This will only happen when teachers are granted the support, respect, and dignity they need to determine how and in what measure their students are to be tested.
The first five years in a child's life are essential to lay a foundation for future learning. Children who have access to quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) meaningfully enhance their social, academic, and cognitive skill set.[1] Students who have access to quality preschool are given a chance to hone those skills at the most critical time, a process which supports their development and learning in later elementary years. Longitudinal studies have shown that high-quality programs not only improve academics, but also improve long-term personal outcomes for children and reduce social costs from crime and welfare.[2] Students who have had access to quality pre-kindergarten early childhood education demonstrate improved school performance, better mastery of language and math, longer attention spans, reduced special education placement, and lower school dropout rates.[3] Socially and emotionally, students are advantaged by having improved interactions with peers, decreased behavioral concerns, and easier adjustments to the high demands of later elementary school.[4]

International research has demonstrated the “well-designed (Early Childhood Care and Education) ECCE policies present policy makers with an opportunity to increase economic growth and at the same time reduce inequality” and that public investment in ECCE is an important component of a larger economic strategy that “produces more balanced and, therefore, more sustainable growth.”[5] Other studies have shown that state investment in quality Pre-K programs provides substantial economic benefit by contributing to the development of a better-educated workforce and higher tax base.[6] Additionally, a report entitled “Economics of Early Childhood Investments” published in 2014 by the White House reveals that such investment decreases long-term social and economic costs of prisons, welfare, and other social programs. Early childhood education, by improving cognitive and socio-emotional development, can lower involvement with the criminal justice system. Lower crime translates into benefits to
society from increased safety and security as well as lower costs to the criminal justice system and incarceration. Early childhood interventions can also reduce the need for remedial education. This research shows that benefits in children’s development may also reduce the need for special education placements and remedial education, thereby lowering public school expenditures.\[7\]

Research by the bipartisan National Council for State Legislatures has additionally found continuing positive long-term social and economic effects of high-quality early childhood care and education on low-income 3- and 4-year-olds. Overall, the study recently documented a “return to society of more than $17 for every dollar invested in the early care and education program, primarily because of the large continuing effect on the reduction of male crime.”[8]

These figures show a dramatic increase in long-term returns and are supported by additional findings that a much higher percentage of the group who received high-quality early education than the non-program group were employed at age 40 (76% vs. 62%), that more of the group who received high-quality early education graduated from high school than the non-program group, and that the group who received high-quality early education had significantly fewer arrests than the non-program group (36% vs. 55% were arrested five times or more).[9]

**Public Policy**

This scholarship has begun to inform education policy at multiple levels, and its implications have not escaped the Obama administration: “In states that make it a priority to educate our youngest children...studies show students grow up more likely to read and do math at grade level, graduate high school, hold a job, [and] form more stable families of their own.”[10] Currently, the Hawai’i pre-kindergarten pilot program, funded in Hawai’i through a federal grant, has a very limited reach, expanding to only twenty sites in the state’s lowest performing and highest poverty elementary schools. Act 109 of 2015 established the Executive Office on Early Learning Public Pre-Kindergarten Program to be administered by the Executive Office on Early Learning and Education Policies in Hawai’i should reflect a comprehensive approach to providing equitable access to high-quality early learning, with a particular focus on children living in poverty, multilingual children, children of color, and children with disabilities. It is critical that these programs be accessible to all families, particularly those in which children are the most vulnerable and have the least access to social services and social support. Access to early learning remains out of reach for many families. [13] Private programs outside of Hawai’i’s K-12 public education have the greatest difficulty in meeting the criteria of consistently good quality, equitable compensation, and affordable access.[14] Currently, most early childhood care and education services in Hawai’i operate in a very price-sensitive market financed primarily by fees from families and supplemented by private contributions, a system which is inherently unstable, uncertain, and not subject to adequate public oversight.[15]

A public program for early childhood education that is connected to the existing K-12 public education structure in Hawai’i, with a relatively stable if inadequate funding base, can provide the critical social and institutional stability necessary for continuity and real social and economic gains over time if properly financed. As the experiences of other states demonstrate, a universal early childhood program increases the benefits for the entire system of public education, as all students arrive at kindergarten better prepared to learn, and early elementary teachers can more easily support their students to meet higher expectations. Connecting early learning to the existing K-12 public education not only makes possible stronger alignment of early childhood education with early elementary programming but also creates a shared structure for teacher professional development and enhanced learning environments. [16] Continuity and stability in this kind of initiative are critical, as the full benefits of strong early childhood programs, those with small class sizes, well-crafted learning environments, and extensive family engagement take years to become fully visible.

**Universal Public Preschools**

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Public school teachers in Hawai‘i have been under attack for the past fifteen years, as policy makers, community leaders and politicians at all levels have blamed teachers and their union for our state’s low standing on national and international tests, and for the social and political ills that result from the failure to educate citizens. Under the new Hawai‘i Educator Effectiveness System, teacher ratings based in part on student standardized test scores (shown to be an inaccurate and misleading indicator of teacher effectiveness[1]), and a new top-down approach to school administration[2] have demoralized teachers and undermined schools as sites of collaborative learning and teaching. These new policies are the result of our state leadership’s response to No Child Left Behind, which have resulted in years of narrowed curricula, teaching to the test and schools increasingly emptied of the joy of learning. Teachers have been watching with a great deal of distress and frustration as the sort of engaging and relevant learning that attracted them to the profession is increasingly eliminated from the public school experience.[3] Teacher job satisfaction in Hawai‘i, as across the country, has continued to drop precipitously over the course of the 21st century.[4] This dissatisfaction has emerged in large part from the deprofessionalization of teaching in public schools.

Teacher Agency

The construction of teacher identity, how teachers understand themselves, is dependent upon their power and agency over their working conditions and their capacity, within positive learning environments, to contribute to student learning and engagement.[5] There has been no recent ‘golden age’ of public school teacher autonomy or empowerment in Hawai‘i, but there is strong evidence that the landscape has shifted dramatically in the past twenty years. In the 1980s, scholars of public education were already arguing that “the prevalent use of textbook and teachers’ guide packages” was one of the “greatest factors responsible for the current ills affecting teaching,” with “administrators…too frequently insisting on the slavish use of these prefabricated materials, which reflects a deprofessionalized image of teaching.”[6] Yet as recently as the 1990s, teachers studied in all content areas and types of schools reported relatively high degrees of personal control over both content and pedagogy, connecting a sense of being efficacious in the classroom with satisfaction about their jobs.[7] Prior to passage of No Child Left Behind, most teachers in public schools said they had considerable influence over classroom decisions,
with more than half indicating they had considerable control over selecting textbooks and other instructional materials and the content, topics, and skills to be taught, and more than three-quarters indicating they were firmly in control of selecting teaching techniques, evaluating and grading students and determining the amount of homework to be assigned.\[8\] The results of multiple studies indicated a significant relationship among curriculum control policies and effects on teachers' perceptions of their own professional discretion and satisfaction.\[9\]

**Effects of Education Reform**

After the passage of No Child Left Behind, key popular educational 'reform' policies in Hawai‘i and across the country moved teaching away from professionalism. These reforms included policies that evaluated teachers based on students’ annual standardized test score gains (using the highly questionable 'value-added method'), fast-track teacher preparation and licensure; and scripted, narrowed curricula. All three educational 'reforms' have found by scholars to lower the professional status of teaching. Value-added policies are 'de-professionalizing' in that they pressure teachers to mechanically teach to tests while systematically devaluing the broader yet essential elements of teaching. Additionally, fast-track teacher preparation and licensure programs de-professionalize teaching by the “lack of focus on pedagogical training, the small amount of time dedicated to preparing teachers to teach, the assignment of inexperienced personnel to the most challenging schools, and the itinerant nature of these teachers.”\[10\] Scripted and narrowed curriculum moves teaching away from professionalization by preventing teachers from using their professional judgment to make curricular decisions for student learning, with the consequent sacrifice of higher-level learning, creativity, flexibility, and breadth of learning.\[11\] This process serves to disconnect teachers from curriculum design work: the way teacher knowledge has been embedded in practice has been replaced by a 'disembedding' of this knowledge, so that teacher planning becomes disconnected from instructional practice in itself, a process that happens 'before [and outside of] action.'\[12\]

In studies that explored teacher identity and agency, “teacher agency has clearly been constrained in the new reform context,” as teachers struggled to “remain openly vulnerable with their students, and to create trusting learning environments in what they described as a more managerial profession with increased accountability pressures.”\[13\] Additional studies examined the relationship between teacher autonomy and on-the-job stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism, and found that “as curriculum autonomy decreased, on-the-job stress increased,” and that “as general teacher autonomy increased so did empowerment and professionalism.”\[14\] Also, as job satisfaction, perceived empowerment, and professionalism increased, on-the-job stress decreased, and greater job satisfaction was associated with a high degree of professionalism and empowerment. These effects of professional autonomy did not differ across teaching level (elementary, middle, high school).\[15\] The growing economic- and management-oriented perspective on education leads to intensification of teachers’ work, implying deskilling and deprofessionalization.\[16\] However, there appear to be multiple sources for the intensification of teacher work, so that the intensification impact is mediated and does not operate in a linear and automatic way, and that it impacts different teachers in different ways. Thus, we argue for an alternative form of professionalization through the acknowledgement of teachers’ specific knowledge base as well as the need to develop it (even if this implies more work). Teachers’ professional development therefore needs to go hand in hand with efforts to “buffer” the threat of intensification.\[17\]

**Public Schools as Spaces for Student Empowerment**

In order for public schools to become spaces of authentic and empowering learning, students must not only experience democratic practices, but also feel that they have ownership in the educational process and the power to effect change. Teachers play a critical role in building student confidence and creating an environment in which students can begin to exercise democratic principles and empowerment. Empowered teachers are in the best position to empower students because they can effect change not only in their classrooms, but in the school. Empowerment has been defined as a “process by which people gain control over their lives…a participation with others to achieve goals, an effort to gain access to resources, and some critical understanding of the sociopolitical environment.”\[18\]

True empowerment requires more than just autonomy and control. It requires support from administration in the form of access to resources such as time and money. Teachers need to be able to advocate, through a collaborative process of developing academic and financial plans, for shared knowledge of resources and support in decision-making from school and state administration. Teachers need to lobby for the recognition that shared power for the benefit of students actually helps to empower administrators and communities. Some of the qualities of an empowering school environment that need to be developed within Hawai‘i public schools include: a) clarity of role and expectations, with less reliance on command-and-control leadership tactics, b) political support and respect for the actual work of teaching, c) socio-emotional peer support with a sense of community, actively developed and sustained through thoughtful policies, d) access to strategic resources such as space, materials, time, and funds, and e) inspired state and school leadership who share the vision of empowering students and value teacher input.\[19\] These factors can lead teachers to feel that they have an honest impact on students and student learning, and the ability to exert influence over their daily work lives. Teachers who do not work in this kind of environment are far less likely to feel empowered, and are not likely to empower students.\[20\]
The factors that contribute to the current deplorable state of affairs in public education in Hawai‘i are grounded in the original purposes of the public education system and the ways in which it perpetuates and hardens social divisions along racial, ethnic and class lines. The historical context of cultural imperialism, illegal occupation, and racial assimilation informed the original purposes of public education in Hawai‘i, and can still be seen in the ways in which public education suffers from underfunding and marginalization, especially in comparison to the private schools in Hawai‘i.[1]

**Historical Background: Tale of Two Systems**

The deep and dramatic divide between public and private education in Hawai‘i originated in the relations of production shaped by sugar and pineapple plantations from the late nineteenth century. American sugar planters, most of whom were the sons of American Protestant missionaries who had come to Hawai‘i to proselytize, benefitted both from the Mahele and from a later 1872 non-judicial foreclosure law, acquiring vast swathes of the most productive land by the late nineteenth century.[2] Importing laborers largely from China, Japan, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, these white plantation owners used race-based wage rates, language and cultural barriers, and differential access to perquisites within the plantation system to divide the plantation workers and successfully control them as sources of cheap labor power.[3] Although Kamehameha II had established the first public schools in Hawai‘i as part of his constitutional nation-state building,[4] the American missionaries established the first private school in Hawai‘i (Punahou) so that their children would not have to go to school with Hawaiian children. [5] The illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian kingdom by American forces in 1893 and subsequent American occupation of Hawai‘i under pretext of annexation had important implications for public education.[6]

Under American occupation, public schools became a more explicit site of assimilation and cultural imperialism, especially as the children of plantation workers came of school age and were required to attend public school.[7] White plantation owners from Kohala and Pahala, George C. Watt and James Campsie, reflected the dominant ideas of the social elite: “Every penny we spend educating these kids beyond the sixth grade is wasted,” complained Watt, to which Campsie responded, “Public education beyond the fourth grade is not only a waste, it is a menace. We spend to educate them and they will destroy us.”[8] In 1910, when Governor Frear sought to minimally increase the starvation budget of the public education system, the editorial board of The Friend (a missionary publication) supported a tax to raise money for schools and teachers’ salaries, arguing that “Hawai‘i is richer than the rest of the American Union in annual per capita production of wealth. Yet it spends a niggardly* $2.07 per capita on its public schools annually, against a mainland average of $3.66.”[9] The tax measure still failed. A 1920 federal survey of education in Hawai‘i found, tellingly, that “Buildings, maintenance, equipment, resources (e.g., libraries), salaries, number of teachers, and number of schools, were deemed inadequate…. [because] the expense to which the Territory has been placed on account of its schools is but a small fraction of the costs which communities on the mainland have had to meet.”[10] Strikingly, the investigation team found that then, as now, property tax rates were unusually low and that “the tax rates in the islands fall most heavily on those…. who can least afford to pay.”[11]

*The original language of this quote has been retained with use of the word ‘niggardly’ to emphasize historical preconceptions of missionaries and plantation owners at the time.
A CRITICAL NEED FOR FUNDING
A Segregated Education System?

Hawai‘i became ‘Americanized’ as a territory, in the first half of the twentieth century, in part through the work of educators who helped to create a two-tiered public school system (English Standard and Common Schools).[12] The Common Schools were institutionalized for plantation workers and English Standard Schools were developed for white “middle level plantation management and technicians, physicians, teachers, social workers, shop keepers, skilled craftsmen, and members of the American military.”[13] For most of the twentieth century, public schools in Hawai‘i served the children of workers and lower middle class, while the social and political elite sent their children into a substantial and well-funded private school system.[14] However, it is important to note that, despite the widening disparities between the public and private systems of education in Hawai‘i, there were strong agents for democratic and ‘progressive’ change in the public school system in the first half of the twentieth century, including Superintendent MacCaughey and Miles Cary, famed principal of McKinley High School.[15] While such efforts did have positive effects on public education, both MacCaughey and Cary were unable to address fundamental underlying inequality evident in widely disparate resources available for the public and private education systems.

This existing social hierarchy in Hawai‘i, slightly modified by the effects of the labor movement, statehood, the Democratic Revolution and the Hawaiian Renaissance, continues to be reproduced through a bifurcated educational system.[16] The reproduction of inequality through the starvation of public education, and privileging of private education by the political elite, was evident even prior to the Democratic Revolution. As John Reineke points out in 1956, the “reluctance of the industrial interests who controlled taxation and government spending, to spend money on high schools, was a powerful factor” in the strengthening of the private school system even at that time.[17]

Lawmaking Reinforcing the Status Quo

Evidence of the continuation and perpetuation of a racially segregated education system is clearly written into the legislative record of Hawai‘i, as elected representatives, all members of the social and
economic elite, most of whom send their own children to private school, fail year after year to provide anything resembling adequate funding for public education in Hawai‘i. Lawmakers in the twenty-first century have, rather, dedicated their considerable powers to measures that make public schools less democratic, less creative, and less joyful places of learning. [18] The current underfunding of Hawai‘i’s public schools is part of a larger historical pattern of almost criminal neglect. When the cost of living is factored in, Hawai‘i is last in the nation in the percent of state and local expenditures for public education per student.[19] Hawai‘i also ranks last in the nation with regards to capital improvement money per student per year, with the Hawai‘i state legislature allocating about $300 per pupil whereas the mainland averages $1,200 to $1,500.[20] Hawai‘i also currently ranks last in the nation when it comes to teacher pay adjusted for cost of living. The average teacher salary in Hawai‘i, adjusted for cost of living, is $32,312.[21]

**Comparing Hawai‘i Public School Funding**

Hawai‘i underfunds its public schools when compared to both school districts on the mainland with similar costs of living and with private schools in Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i spends $11,823 per pupil, which is 17th in the nation when compared to other states.[22] However, using a state-by-state comparison is not the most accurate measure of public education funding. Better, more insightful comparison is possible through comparison of Hawai‘i’s funding with other school districts of similar size and demographics, rather than with other states. Hawai‘i is the only statewide school district, and school districts on the continent with high costs of living are averaged with school districts with rural districts with lower costs of living in statewide aggregate analysis. Illinois, which has a similar cost per pupil as Hawai‘i, has 863 school districts, with one expensive school district: Chicago.[23] When comparing school districts of similar size, Hawai‘i is 227 on the list, even without adjusting for cost of living. Comparisons of spending per pupil in America’s largest school districts yield interesting results.[24]

Hawai‘i’s major private schools average $15,173 in per pupil spending. When Catholic schools, which are subsidized by the Roman Catholic Diocese, are removed from the aggregate, per pupil spending in Hawai‘i private schools reaches nearly $19,173 dollars per student. [25] This figure does not, however, include endowment funds that increase the actual amount spent per pupil. As Punahou President Jim Scott revealed in 2014, “The real cost of our education per student is $26,000… The difference is met through our endowment — now at $235 million — and fundraising $12 million or $15 million a year. Every tuition-paying parent is being subsidized by fundraising and by the Punahou endowment.”[26]

**What Is To Be Done?**

While funding provides one lens useful in examining how social hierarchy is reproduced by education in Hawai‘i, it is a critical and previously inadequately examined area of analysis. And the possible remedies for the inequities resulting from underfunding are limited only by the imagination and political will, not of legislators but of the citizens of Hawai‘i. This is the education of our children, and if we are not willing to hold ourselves accountable, no one will.
ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION – SCHOOLS OUR KEIKI DESERVE


WHOLE CHILD EDUCATION


SUPPORTING ALL OF OUR STUDENTS


[2] Ibid.


CLASS SIZE IS A SOCIAL, JUSTICE ISSUE


VOCATIONAL EDUCATION


QUALITY FACILITIES


SUPPORTING SMALL AND RURAL SCHOOLS


[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.


[8] Ibid, 149.

[9] Ibid. 145.

[10] Ibid, 149.


[13] Ibid.


[18] Ibid.

RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT


[2] Ibid.


[7] Ibid.


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