



HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER
Informing the Education Community

Informational Briefing Presented Before the
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by
Donald B. Young, Director
Hawai'i Educational Policy Center
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

**REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE
ON SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION 118 SD1 HD1**

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2007 Hawai‘i State Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 118 S.D.1 HD 1 IMPROVING THE COMMUNITY’S UNDERSTANDING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION’S PROGRAMS AND SCHOOL EXPENSES INCLUDING A COMPARISON WITH OTHER STATES ON ADEQUACY OF FUNDS.

Among the requests contained in the resolution were the following:

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the Hawai‘i Educational Policy Center undertake a study of existing data that compares Hawai‘i with Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Kansas, and Washington (or five other "peer" states) suggested by the department in areas such as:

- (1) Average class size;
- (2) Student-teacher ratio;
- (3) Average number of students per counselor;
- (4) Length of school day and school year;
- (5) Per pupil funding;
- (6) Percentage of students with special needs and school budget dedicated to those students;
- (7) Percentage of school budget spent on administration; and
- (8) And/or other data that might indicate the reasons for high achievement rates, and propose measures (funding and resources) needed in Hawai‘i to provide comparable educational services; ...”

The Hawai‘i Educational Policy Center (HEPC) reviewed existing data from the Education Commission of the States (ECS), the National Center on Education Statistics, the Hawai‘i Department of Education, and other sources. States selected for this study by the State Legislature in SCR 118 SD1 HD1 were:

- Connecticut
- Kansas
- Massachusetts
- Minnesota
- New Hampshire, and
- Washington

The Hawai‘i Department of Education in the Superintendent’s Reports identifies “comparable” systems as:

- Nebraska
- Rhode Island
- Wyoming

The Hawai‘i Educational Policy Center—looking at state populations, student enrollments, and number of teachers that are closest to Hawai‘i’s data added:

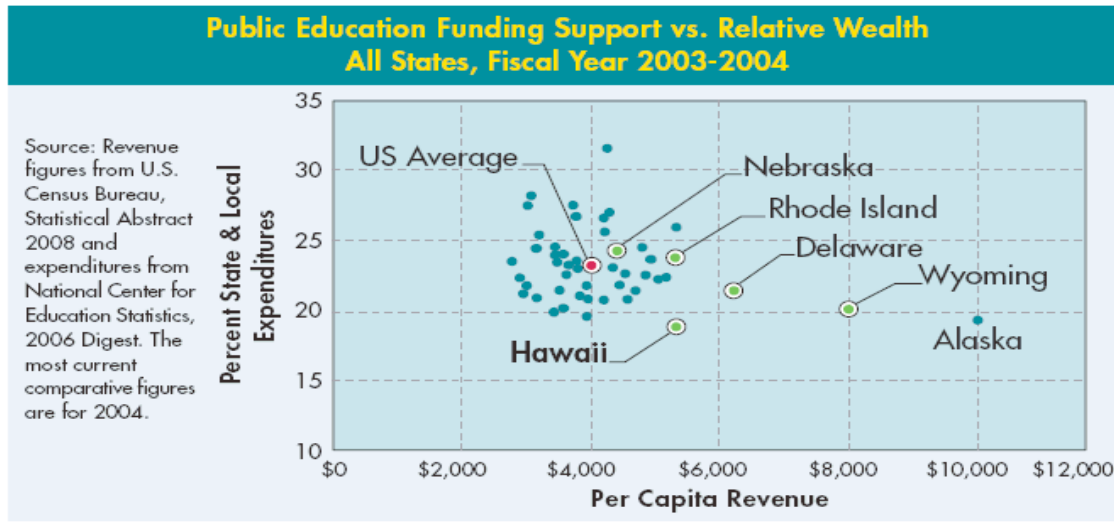
- Montana
- New Mexico
- South Dakota
- Vermont
- West Virginia.

Because much of public education in the United States is delivered through relatively independent school districts, it was not possible to easily access data that could answer all the requests in SCR 118 (for example, length of school day/year). Comparing state data masks the great diversity in rural vs. urban schools, district size, sources of school funding, and other variables that impact education. The states selected reflect significant differences that invite further examination to explain those differences, which was beyond the capacity of HEPC to conduct. Nevertheless, HEPC believes some of the data collected can contribute to the overall understanding of public education sought by SCR 118 SD1 HD1.

Preliminary Findings from States Comparisons

- Nationally, of the 6.2 million education FTE staff in the 2006–2007 school year, 52% were teachers.
 - Average for the 14 selected states is 51%
 - Hawai‘i is above the mean at 54%.
- Nationally, the average student:teacher ratio for the 2006–2007 school year was 15.7:1; the average elementary student teacher ratio was 20.2:1, and for secondary schools it was 12:1.
 - Hawai‘i’s statewide student:teacher ratio is among the highest at 16.3:1, higher than the national average, and higher than the average of the selected states at 14.0:1.
- Hawai‘i compares favorably (5/14) in student:counselor ratio (270:1).
- Hawai‘i’s schools are the largest among the selected states.
- Hawai‘i as a single district ranks 11th among over 17,000 districts nationally. Hawai‘i’s administrative districts are also among the largest.
- Hawai‘i is at the top end among larger districts for the percentage of total funds allocated for instruction at 57%.
- Hawai‘i has a high percentage of schools that qualify for U.S. DOE Title I funding. While nationally 60.3% of schools are Title I eligible, 70.1% of Hawai‘i’s schools qualify for this federal program.
- Hawai‘i has a relatively larger percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunches (41.9%) than other states.
- Hawai‘i spends a lower percentage of its state budget for education than do the selected states or the national average.

Figure 1. Comparison of public support for education

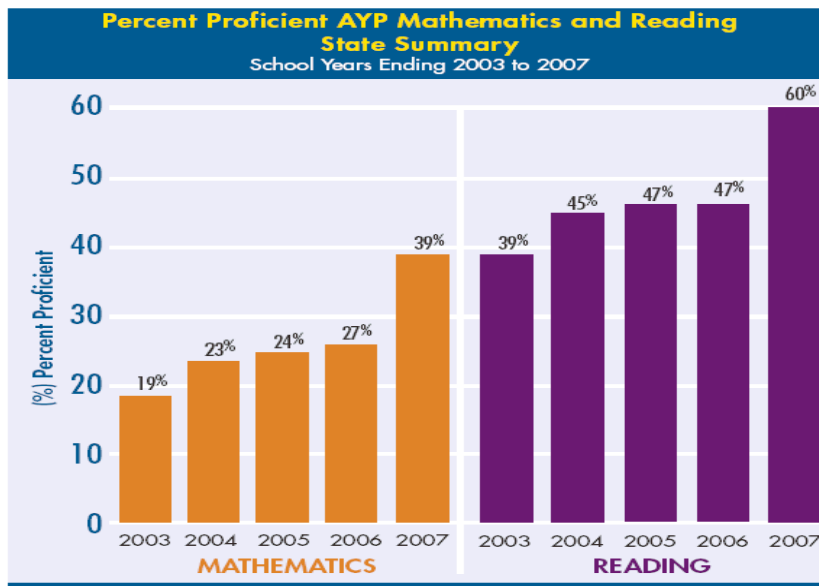


Student Achievement

In general, Hawai'i students rank on the lower end of achievement compared with the selected states.

- Hawai'i fourth and eighth graders rank low (13/14) among the selected states on standardized tests for math and reading.
- Hawai'i college-bound seniors rank low compared to the selected states on SAT scores in mathematics, critical thinking, and writing.
- However, Hawai'i's data indicate steady improvement in mathematics and reading on Hawai'i State Assessments.

Figure 2. Hawai'i student performance on state assessments 2003–2007



Source: Hawaii State Department of Education, System Evaluation & Reporting Section.

Summary

The most consistent data among the selected states are:

- Larger sizes of Hawai'i's state system and administrative districts
- Larger average school size in Hawai'i
- Larger student:teacher ratio in Hawai'i
- Lower student:counselor ratio in Hawai'i
- Lower percentage of state funding for education in Hawai'i
- Comparatively lower student test scores in Hawai'i.