

Should Hawai‘i Create Autonomous Local Education Agencies?

PART I Questions and Issues

January 2003



HAWAI‘I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER

Informing the Education Community



HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER

The Hawai'i Educational Policy Center (HEPC) is an independent policy research organization that provides timely, concise, relevant and objective policy briefs, reports, articles, studies, forums, and workshops that reflect the needs and requests of Hawai'i policymakers. HEPC strives to become a trusted partner with policymakers in efforts to understand, nurture, improve, and adopt the best and most appropriate policies for our life-long learners in Hawai'i.

The Hawai'i Educational Policy Center...

- Works with policymakers to identify what information they need.
- Reviews, collects and distributes information on existing research on issues relevant to Hawai'i.
- Provides concise, objective, independent analysis of research.
- Provides timely, targeted, interpreted data, briefings and testimony for policymakers.
- Maintains a website with links to cutting-edge research and policy.
- Commissions a range of policy briefs, articles, studies and reports that generate new knowledge and insights that inform policy decisions.
- Conducts, facilitates, and participates in educational forums and workshops.
- Initiates research on emerging and enduring issues that affect the quality of schools and the quality of learning.

Contact Us

THE HAWAI'I EDUCATIONAL POLICY CENTER
1776 University Avenue, UES 103 • Honolulu, HI 96822
Phone: (808) 956-9563 • Fax: (808) 956-5665
Email: hepc@hawaii.edu • Website: www.hawaii.edu/hepc

Introduction.

In the language of school governance, Hawai‘i’s Statewide Educational Agency (SEA) is also its Local Educational Agency (LEA). The School Community Based Management (SCBM) Councils at individual schools play a similar role with limited powers.

Hawai‘i’s single district system of 184,360 students in 258 public schools is large, but not as large as some urban mainland districts. Hawai‘i’s schools, at all levels, are among the nation’s largest, especially our high schools, which are more than twice the national average (1,468 students vs. 752). Hawai‘i’s-student teacher ratios are also significantly higher than the national average.

In most states the state level and the district/school level are linked through a mid-level board or agency, operating at a county or regional level, often with a service orientation. Below the regional agency or board are “districts” which range in size, but are perhaps best represented by a single high school with feeder middle and elementary schools. These districts have community-elected Boards Of Education and they are referred to as LEAs. In most cases these LEAs have the power and duty to administer a school property tax system that supplements funding from state, federal and other sources.

In part, this analysis is an examination of Hawai‘i’s system which functions without mid-level LEAs, the pros and cons of creating such a system, the appropriate level or regional jurisdiction for such an LEA, and the specific kinds of powers and duties that would be most beneficial should such a system be adopted.

Hawai‘i’s system is currently in transition from seven district offices led by District Superintendents (serving school populations from 11,000 to 37,000 students) to a system of fourteen so-called Complex Area Superintendents, whose staff manage and serve two or three complexes (a complex is one high school and its feeder middle and elementary schools). There are forty-three complexes in the state system.

In the words of a Hawai‘i Department of Education administrator referring to the Complex Area Superintendents: “Currently, most are trying to function as district superintendent and as Complex Area Superintendent. Most are nearing exhaustion doing both jobs at the same time. Their staffing is inadequate. Yet, we don’t want to recreate the mini-empires of the old districts, either...Often there are unclear roles and responsibilities among office staff who function some of the time in roles like SEA staff would in other states (e.g. setting standards, monitoring and enforcing compliance with those), and then function like LEA staff as well (e.g., assisting schools, enabling implementations). There are conflicts of interest embedded in this structure.”

A number of key policy issues and questions need to be identified and analyzed to provide an immediate context for Department of Education policy formation in the short term, and a framework for a subsequent Research Study.

Snapshot of the Current System.

Hawai‘i has a single elected state-level Board of Education, which appoints a state superintendent of education, directly responsible for 258 regular public schools, and indirectly responsible to provide selected support for 25 public charter schools. Charter schools are expected to double in number in the next few years.

There is a centralized office, and seven administrative district offices, which serve as locations for communications, oversight and services flowing to the individual schools. Since 2001, complexes (high schools and their feeder middle schools and elementary schools) have been grouped in twos and threes, and Complex Area Superintendents were appointed to provide oversight and support. These Complex Area Superintendents are physically located in the district offices, and somewhat replace a single District Superintendent. While most of the Complex Areas represent a group of complexes in adjacent communities, at least one, Farrington & Kaiser, administratively group two communities separated by the urban core of Honolulu, social economic demographics, and cultures. Each of the neighbor island counties has a single district office.

Basic Profile of Hawai‘i’s K-12 Public Education system (source, HIDOE):

- Hawai‘i Public Schools Enrollment 184,360
- Number of Regular Public Schools 258
- Number of Public Charter Schools 25
- Students Not Disadvantaged 90,670 (49%)
- Economically Disadvantaged only 58,422 (31.8%)
- Special Education Students Only 9,429 (5.1%)
- Limited English Only 6,264 (2.3%)
- Multiple Disadvantages 20,907 (11.4%)

Table 1. Ten Year Trends

| | 1990 | 2000 |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Students receiving Lunch subsidies | 46,522 | 74,558 |
| Special Education Students | 9,778 | 20,138 |
| Limited English Proficiency | 8,861 | 12,837 |

HAWAI'I DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION EMPLOYEES

Total DOE Employees: 21,220

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| Professional Staff: | |
| Regular Teachers | 11,024 |
| Special Education Teachers | 1,833 |
| Principals | 247 |
| Vice Principals | 255 |
| Superintendents | 22 |
| Non-Teaching Support Staff | <u>7,839</u> |
| TOTAL | 21,220 |

Total Non-Teaching Support Staff: 7,839

| | |
|------------------|-------|
| School Level | 6,891 |
| District Offices | 441 |
| State Offices | 507 |

SCHOOL LEVEL VS. DISTRICT LEVEL EMPLOYEES

| | |
|----------------|--------|
| School Level | 20,383 |
| District/State | 1,231 |

On a purely administrative or organizational level, if a more formalized LEA system were created using the existing districts or complexes, it is possible to estimate the size of the constituencies served by future LEAs.

Table 2. Department of Education Districts

| District | Number of Schools | Regular Education Students | Special Education Students | Total Students | Resident Population | Potential Voters Over 18 | Households with children under 18 |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Statewide | 255 | 161,990 | 20,808 | 182,798 | 1,211,537 | 915,770 | 153,008 |
| Central | 41 | 30,039 | 3,527 | 33,566 | 207,298 | 151,829 | 29,738 |
| Leeward | 41 | 33,719 | 3,367 | 38,250 | 211,395 | 150,504 | 29,240 |
| Hawai'i | 43 | 21,644 | 3,325 | 24,969 | 148,677 | 109,825 | 19,846 |
| Honolulu | 54 | 29,879 | 2,921 | 32,800 | 321,587 | 264,014 | 31,791 |
| Kauai | 16 | 9,121 | 1,142 | 10,263 | 58,463 | 43,020 | 8,040 |
| Maui | 30 | 18,765 | 2,732 | 21,488 | 128,094 | 95,383 | 16,873 |
| Windward | 30 | 15,965 | 2,303 | 18,268 | 135,871 | 101,049 | 17,479 |

Source: Hawai'i Census 2000 General Demographic Characteristic Profiles: State of Hawai'i Education Administrative Areas, High School Complexes. <http://64.0.86.234/~g/c15sd.pdf>

The data in Table 2 illustrate three levels of meaningful community input or engagement with the public schools: the population that would be “served” by a mid-level LEA in each district; the population of adults who theoretically could vote should such a district be headed by an elected policy making body; and the number of households with school age children who theoretically could participate in Parent Teacher Associations, SCBMs, or other school-based decision making or involvement for parents. Some have proposed decentralizing the Hawai‘i system using the existing districts as basic units. Table 1 indicates the level of “intimacy” or “ownership” that could be experienced by adults in each of these units. With the exception of Kauai, all are significantly larger than an existing Hawai‘i Senate district.

These data also illustrate differences in the numbers and percentages of special education students, who require targeted services that are often coordinated and partly delivered from a complex or district level.

Table 3. Department of Education Complexes

| Hawai‘i Admin. Complex (High & Feeder Schools) | 2000 Population | 2000 Population Over 18 years | Number of Households with Children under 18 years |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>Statewide</i> | <i>1,211,537</i> | <i>915,770</i> | <i>153,008</i> |
| HONOLULU DISTRICT | | | |
| Farrington | 46,537 | 34,494 | 5,257 |
| Kaimuki | 77,153 | 66,091 | 6,978 |
| Kaiser | 30,670 | 24,129 | 3,810 |
| Kalani | 36,574 | 29,828 | 3,861 |
| McKinley | 69,346 | 58,463 | 6,155 |
| Roosevelt | 60,707 | 51,009 | 5,730 |
| CENTRAL DISTRICT | | | |
| Aiea | 41,276 | 32,435 | 4,810 |
| Leilehua | 41,608 | 29,232 | 6,308 |
| Mililani | 45,123 | 32,452 | 7,112 |
| Moanalua | 37,313 | 28,238 | 5,017 |
| Radford | 29,543 | 19,923 | 4,951 |
| Waialua | 12,435 | 9,406 | 1,538 |
| LEEWARD DISTRICT | | | |
| Campbell | 43,637 | 30,027 | 6,667 |
| Nanakuli | 11,427 | 7,346 | 1,594 |
| Pearl City | 48,861 | 38,456 | 5,627 |
| Waianae | 30,832 | 20,282 | 4,479 |
| Waipahu | 51,458 | 37,400 | 6,770 |
| Kapolei | 25,180 | 16,993 | 4,103 |
| WINDWARD DISTRICT | | | |
| Castle | 52,148 | 39,032 | 6,759 |
| Kahuku | 17,877 | 12,342 | 2,263 |
| Kailua | 28,396 | 21,264 | 3,522 |
| Kalaheo | 37,450 | 28,411 | 4,935 |

| Hawai‘i Admin. Complex (High & Feeder Schools) | 2000 Population | 2000 Population Over 18 years | Number of Households with Children under 18 years |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| <i>Statewide</i> | <i>1,211,537</i> | <i>915,770</i> | <i>153,008</i> |
| HAWAI‘I ISLAND DISTRICT | | | |
| Keaau | 16,639 | 11,817 | 2,369 |
| Hilo | 27,629 | 21,031 | 3,428 |
| Waiakea | 19,766 | 14,757 | 2,643 |
| Honokaa | 14,255 | 10,313 | 1,989 |
| Kau | 5,751 | 4,234 | 751 |
| Kohala | 6,038 | 4,564 | 708 |
| Laupahoehoe | 1,780 | 1,335 | 215 |
| Pahoa | 14,767 | 10,326 | 2,153 |
| Kealakehe | 31,340 | 23,479 | 4,196 |
| Konawaena | 31,340 | 7,969 | 1,394 |
| MAUI DISTRICT | | | |
| Baldwin | 22,782 | 16,631 | 3,102 |
| Hana | 1,855 | 1,302 | 248 |
| Lahainaluna | 17,967 | 13,986 | 2,035 |
| Lanai | 3,193 | 2,303 | 448 |
| Maui | 41,634 | 31,647 | 5,175 |
| Molokai | 7,257 | 4,873 | 1,027 |
| KAUAI DISTRICT | | | |
| King Kekaulike | 33,406 | 26,641 | 4,838 |
| Kapaa | 24,873 | 18,016 | 3,584 |
| Kauai | 22,747 | 17,170 | 2,945 |
| Waimea | 10,683 | 7,739 | 1,485 |
| Niihau | 160 | 95 | 26 |

Source: Hawai‘i Census 2000 General Demographic Characteristic Profiles: State of Hawai‘i Education Administrative Areas, High School Complexes.

The data in Table 3 depict the same breakdown by high-school complex, a single high school with its feeder elementary and middle (or intermediate) schools. In a decentralized LEA structure based on the high-school complex units, the level of intimacy or ownership for the adult population or parents would be significantly smaller.

Key Questions For This Study

1. *What could be the role of a mid-level (district, area complex or complex) appointed or elected LEA Board in the context of a system that will continue a Statewide BOE with a single state-level source of funding?*
2. *What are the conceptual strengths and weaknesses of Hawai'i's new mid-level Complex Area system, which incorporates both administrative oversight and service delivery units, and which is not managed by an autonomous appointed or elected body?*
3. *What operational authorities and duties are found at Hawai'i's State BOE, and DOE HQ in contrast to those authorities and duties that are routinely delegated to the district offices, complex area superintendents, and individual schools?*
4. *What are the impacts of conflicting demands at the district offices for competence and expertise in compliance roles vs. subject area expertise and competence for school support roles?*
5. *What incentives are available to enhance the meaningful engagement of the community at an LEA level?*
6. *What incentives are available to enhance the meaningful integration of complex-level collaboration for a coherent curriculum and other "best" practices?*
7. *What have been the strengths and weaknesses of Hawai'i's school-level stakeholder representative SCBM councils, and how might this change with a new emphasis on the complex or area complex?*
8. *What are the powers and duties of Hawai'i's Charter School Boards, and do they represent a useful model for establishing a mid-level LEA?*
9. *What are the implications of a policy that would emphasize an educational continuum starting at pre-school and moving all the way up into college, the so-called P-20 perspective?*
10. *How do the above questions relate to previous efforts by groups such as the Act 238 Collaborative, the 2002 Legislative Task Force on School Reform, the Joint Legislative Committee reviewing the Felix Consent Decree, the Civic Forum, and various reports by the Legislative Auditor.*

1. What could be the role of a mid-level (district, area complex or complex) appointed or elected LEA Board in the context of a system that will continue a Statewide BOE with a single state-level source of funding?

- New powers. An LEA might assume selected decision-making powers, either allotted to it through law or delegated to it by the State BOE.
- Transition strategies. Creation of interim “Accountability LEAs” might be used to phase-in those communities/complexes ready for greater independence. Greater flexibility and authority might be granted in exchange for a sound plan to incorporate research-based best practices throughout the LEA. (Similar to the so-called Charter Districts identified by recent Education Commission of the States studies).
- Rule by board. An LEA headed by a council or board would have an additional responsibility for community input, community education, and community engagement in its jurisdiction. This would be a shift of power from administrators. This would need to be interfaced with current experiments with complex-wide principal meetings.
- Selection of education leaders. Most mainland boards of education are empowered to hire and fire district and school administrators. This is one of the two most important powers of LEAs, the other being generating revenues through property taxes. The creation of an LEA structure would necessarily include a discussion of whether it would have these powers.
- Selection of school sites. While an LEA might not have the staff to oversee the building of a new school, it might be capable of participating in the selection of a new site, the decision to build one large or two smaller campuses, or the design of a new school that would accommodate smaller learning communities.
- Accountability. An LEA might assume operational responsibility for meeting statewide standards and national goals, including the evaluation of its component personnel and schools.
- Data collection. An LEA might assume responsibility for gathering basic data on its administrators, schools, teachers, and students.
- Local advocates. An LEA might assume responsibility as an advocate for resources in its jurisdiction, and providing support for repairs, maintenance and construction of educational facilities. The LEA might, theoretically, serve as a voice for stakeholders whose views and needs might not be heard otherwise.
- Active statewide voice. An LEA might assume responsibility as a member of the larger educational community to participate in legislative, BOE and other policy discussions and debates.
- New political leadership. It would be naïve to expect that the creation of a new level of decision making would not also create the opportunities for people to either use the LEA for political purposes, or to use the LEA as a springboard for a personal political career. This has been the experience throughout the U.S. mainland. It is the experience of Honolulu’s Neighborhood Boards.

- Managing funds. An LEA might be responsible for accepting more block grants and lump sum funding and allocating it according to the circumstances and needs of its community and schools.
- Coordinate partnerships. An LEA might be responsible for selection of one or more lead non-profit partners for major federal, state and private grants.
- Coherent curriculum selection. An LEA might be involved in a complex-wide evaluation and selection of sequential curricula, texts, materials, and related in-service training.
- Common complex school schedules. An LEA might be empowered to select a single yearly- weekly – and daily school schedule for schools in the complex.
- Internal school restructuring. An LEA might be the operational support system to create smaller schools-within-schools and other learning community units.
- Economy of scale purchasing. An LEA might be engaged in bulk purchases of supplies and equipment not handled at the state level.
- Implied equitable funding for all of the above. All of the potential roles for an LEA would depend on adequate, decentralized funding, and the formulas to equitably distribute such funds. This might lead to new methods of budgeting and funding of schools, such as the per pupil approach for charters.

2. What are the conceptual strengths and weaknesses of Hawai‘i’s current system, which does not incorporate a mid-level decision-making appointed or elected board between the Statewide BOE and an individual school’s SCBM council?

Strengths of the Current System: The Case for Using the Existing Administrative System

- Communication is not a challenge. In a relatively small state, contacts and networks create greater opportunities for communication between central or district DOE staff and the schools. In many cases, the people in these offices came up through the ranks, have worked in schools as administrators, and are already known to current school administrators and faculty leaders.
- Easier to initiate systemic reforms. Dr. Stephen Portch, Chancellor Emeritus, University System of Georgia, a pioneer in developing a preschool through college seamless educational system (known as P-20), remarked that Hawai‘i’s smaller size and unified system is a much more manageable and receptive structure for the incorporation of the P-20 model than most mainland states that must create links between completely independent school systems and levels within those systems. The University of Georgia needed significant resources just to begin the dialogue with over a hundred separate districts.
- Technology overcomes size. In the past, sharing of data between different levels of a complex system was difficult. Paper was duplicated and sent. Information had to be converted. Since the improvement of communication through computers, email, and the Internet, it is far easier to gather and collate data on each school in centralized offices.

- Rural districts are already small. In smaller rural areas, particularly on the Neighbor Islands, the need for an additional mid-level formal LEA may be minimized, as there are fewer schools, fewer students, and greater theoretical ability to communicate easily. In many other states, rural school districts are busy consolidating to maximize shared resources. They find themselves too small for success.
- SCBM is the ultimate decentralization. The DOE has already implemented a major decentralization initiative through the School Community Based Management system, begun in 1989, now including 81% of all public schools. The SCBM system not only decentralizes decision making to school-based stakeholders, it provides waivers from a variety of statewide regulations and labor contracts.
- Power and responsibility are shifting to the state level. The emphasis of the No Child Left Behind federal law is on *statewide* accountability. A clean line of authority from BOE, to Superintendent, to District support office is helpful in minimizing confusion and miscommunication.
- Larger units can reduce costs. Economies of scale for purchase of materials and services can be maximized without an additional mid-level LEA.
- Equitable funding. A dominant SEA can overcome social economic status (SES) disparities among districts and complexes.
- The cost of change. Formalizing a mid-level LEA could conceivably require the allocation of staff, time and funds exclusively for each LEA. Thus, staff, time and funding currently available to serve more than one area or complex would be restricted or compartmentalized. The energy and resources used for this would be diverted from the classroom.
- More layers = more turf. The difficulties of a compartmentalized and fragmented system might be exacerbated with a more formalized LEA structure.
- Limited impact on community sense of ownership. Recent proposals to decentralize administration and governance range from creation of 7 to 14 elected district boards. This would create residential governance structures representing an average of 171,000 (for a system divided into 7 sub-district LEAs) to about 75,000-80,000 (for those divided into 14). Neither of these represents particularly intimate communities.

Weaknesses of the Current System: The Case For Creation of Mid-Level LEAs

- Atomization & fragmentation. Notwithstanding the theoretical potential for coordination in a unified system, the current bureaucratic culture appears to operate with maximum flexibility and fragmentation. DOE system-wide programs or policies can result in isolation and atomization of schools and classrooms. The lack of an intermediate level institution leaves too great a gap between the BOE and the teacher. In other words, the potential for a unified and articulated system has not been reached.

Hawai'i's Department of Education has identified an important subunit of our public -education system: the school complex, where all the students in a

neighborhood or community ultimately complete their K-12 public school education. While this is a unit on paper, in fact, most educational reform initiatives do NOT treat the complex or even the district as a unified and coordinated subsystem. For example:

- a) The training and retraining of principals and administrators is usually not done by grouping them only according to complex. They are often fragmented or divided by school level, or not grouped at all. There is no systematic policy or program that *requires* the principals and administrators to be trained as a complex team. The burden on a principal to be a super CEO/Educational leader is greater because he or she is not really part of a complex team of principals.
- b) The pre-training and retraining of teachers suffers from the same fragmentation. School levels or disciplines often take precedence over complex or team membership. Specialization works against the unity of the complex. Math teachers from different schools/complexes/districts meet here. Special education teachers meet over there.
- c) Communication among the school levels is often non-existent. Sixth grade elementary teachers do not regularly meet and coordinate their activities with middle school 7th grade teachers. Eighth grade teachers do not work with 9th grade high-school teachers. And 12th grade high school teachers are not working with UH community college and four-year campus lecturers or faculty. We have layers of educational cultures that pretend what came before and what comes afterward in a student's educational pathway is none of their business.
- d) Within the districts or complexes, grants requiring partnerships with non-profits and businesses are often scattered and uncoordinated. These grants often are developed with a promise of future systemic reform, yet they are developed and implemented in a fragmented manner. There is no overall lead community NGO partner for the complex to assist in keeping track of the various funding flowing into the complex. DOE workshops on grants now encourage district or complex-level collaborations, but this is optional.
- e) The development of individual Standards Implementation Designs (SIDs) for each school is not done as part of an overall district or complex approach to student and school achievement, educational visions, etc. Each school is on its own. There has been some initial experimentation in the development of complex-level SIDs, but this is in a very early experimental stage.
- f) In selecting textbooks and articulated curricula within the complex, there are few policy requirements to coordinate one grade with another, or one school level with another. Thus, middle school teachers often are faced with students who had very different academic experiences and skills as elementary students within the same complex. The same is true of the high school, where an even greater mix of knowledge and skills are thrown into the same classes. The turnover among administrators and faculty further complicates this problem, as the instability in each school has no complex-level stabilizing force or process.

- g) In considering the scheduling of vacations throughout the school year, each school is on their own, and few attempts are made to create common year-round schedules for entire complexes. Thus, families with students at different schools must juggle differing vacation schedules, and the delivery of in-service training and student enrichment or remedial services is more costly throughout the complex. Differential scheduling also makes it more difficult to arrange for coordination among with elementary, middle and high school staff and faculty within a single complex.
 - h) The outside community is often not able to negotiate the fragmented cluster of schools that may be within their neighborhood, but operating as independent entities. The ability of the community to contribute to educational needs is thus frustrated by this fragmentation.
 - i) The adoption of various educational reform initiatives is often done at the school level, with little or no requirement to address how it may affect the entire P-20 pipeline. Thus, district and complex level administrators and DOE service staffs are forced to address multiple initiatives, sometimes within the same school. Reform clutter is thus exacerbated, and the best practices are lost in a sea of reform.
- Crippled support units. The cutbacks in staff at the central and district offices have minimized the benefits of economies of scale and coordination. The district offices are overburdened, and increasingly occupied with creation of forms and documents rather than delivery of services to the schools. There is a persistent criticism that Hawai'i's system has a "bloated" bureaucracy, although recent reports place the out-of-school administration at only 2.2% of the system, less than the national average of 3.9%. At the Honolulu District offices, six complexes are "coordinated" or "supported" with a total staff of approximately 110, including clerical and special education personnel. This averages out to a little over 2 support staff for each of the 54 public schools in the Honolulu district.
 - Dilution of qualifications. District and Complex level support personnel are caught between the need to attend to compliance issues and the need to provide expert support. This may result in the dilution of qualifications for either role.
 - Compliance vs. innovation. Because compliance-related work is time consuming, district or complex level time and resources are not as available for new reform initiatives, such as dividing larger schools into smaller administrative and learning units.
 - Incomplete implementation and support. In a 1998 report (98-4), the State Auditor wrote of the efforts to decentralize the system through SCBM councils: "We found that the Department of Education has not provided the level of support schools need to assume their new responsibilities. The department could provide either more training or redesign training content. Learning support centers established by Section 302A-1104, HRS, are not functioning as intended. School principals contend that the department's 1996 reorganization has resulted in less support than when services were provided by district level personnel. We also found that the Department of Education has decentralized decision-making but has not given schools sufficient autonomy and flexibility. SCBM and non-SCBM schools alike are freer to use the funds allocated to them, but the actual proportion

of funds over which they have complete control still is relatively insignificant. We reviewed the FY1995-96 expenditures of 21 schools and found that just four percent of the expenditures had no departmental or other agency limitations. We also noted that SCBM decision-making guidelines need clarification. In addition, school-based budgeting has not been adequately reviewed.”

- No sunshine or democracy. Because Hawai‘i’s district or complex level organizations are not headed by formalized councils or elected bodies, there are no requirements for open meetings or for either stakeholder or community input above the school level.
- Much is started, little is finished. The BOE and DOE policy makers and managers of the current system appear to follow the pattern of initiating a promising reform, but failing to fully fund or implement it. The State Legislature, as the primary source of operational funds, follows the same pattern.
- Oversized administrative districts. The size of the “communities” served by the administrative district offices averages 171,000 residents, hardly an intimate neighborhood where residents can feel connected to a school.

(The Average “District” size in the US, out of 14,571 school districts, is 3,174 students. Top five average state district sizes were: DC – 70,762 (1 district); Florida – 35,482 (67 districts); Maryland – 35,274 (24 districts); Nevada – 19,154 (17 districts); Utah – 11,946 (40 districts); N. Carolina – 10,517 (120 districts). Hawai‘i’s *Administrative* school districts, range from 10,000 to 37,000 students, with “average” school sizes from 653 to 911 students.)

- Community alienation. Genuine, naturally-occurring communities and cultures may feel they are part of a system that does not reflect their perspective. For example, the Waianae Coast of Oahu is part of a district office with two other complexes, Kapolei and Campbell, but has a number of schools whose students are overwhelmingly from Hawai‘ian or Part Hawai‘ian backgrounds. (Waianae High School – 51%; Nanakuli High and Intermediate School – 68%; Maili Elementary School – 54%; Waianae Elementary School – 69%; Nanakuli Elementary School – 92%.), unlike students from the Kapolei or Campbell complex schools. The larger district structure could dilute the community’s sense of ownership, control, and ability to direct services and programs that are attuned to the cultural needs of the Waianae Coast.

The community served by these schools is also demographically poorer than the Leeward District as a whole, as illustrated by the percent of students who qualify for school lunch subsidies (Waianae High School – 63.8%; Nanakuli High and Intermediate School – 67.8%; Maili Elementary School – 82.4%; Waianae Elementary School – 68%; Nanakuli Elementary School – 70%). The design of appropriate and effective remedial programs might well be different if done solely from the perspective of the needs of these residents.

3. What operational authorities and duties are found at Hawai‘i’s State BOE, and DOE HQ in contrast to those authorities and duties that are routinely delegated to the district offices, complex area superintendents, and individual schools?

Most of these questions cannot be answered without further inquiry or research. This might include but not be limited to:

- A survey of Hawai‘i DOE District offices, Complex Area Superintendents, and support staff to accurately determine the operational decentralization of each, and to what extent the roles and responsibilities of these units are consistent in each jurisdiction or dependent on the strengths, interests, and approaches of the Complex Area Superintendents. This survey would not be about the formal DOE structure as much as the actual, day-to-day functions performed at the administrative district level.
- A survey of the State BOE and DOE personnel to distinguish formal powers and duties from those routinely delegated. A review of the policies, decisions and agenda items of the BOE is required to determine the limits of a part-time BOE.
- A survey of the existing laws to determine how much flexibility is already granted to the DOE administration. For example, the following sections of the law are pertinent to this issue:

Section 302A-1102 of Hawai‘i state law clearly gives the administration the power to assign responsibilities to new administrative units. However, this is an internal process and not governed by the sunshine law. Public input would be optional.

[§302A-1102] Department of education; statewide and regional administrative services. The department shall serve as the central support system responsible for the overall administration of statewide educational policy, interpretation, and development of standards for compliance with state and federal laws, and coordination and preparation of a system wide budget for the public schools. The department may establish regional administrative units to provide administrative support to the schools for personnel, fiscal, and procurement services. The regional administrative units may also be assigned responsibility for the administration and operation of special education programs and special schools. [L 1996, c 89, pt of §2]

The next section, 1110, makes it clear that the school district cannot be changed solely by administration action. This section might need amendment in a new structure. This might also be considered in light of the Transitional LEA or Charter District concept noted above, and paralleling the transition of a regular school to an SCBM school, or the transition of a regular school to a charter school.

[§302A-1110] Educational districts not applicable. The educational districts established by section 4-1 shall not be applicable to, nor alter, the school board or departmental school districts, established by section 13-1, or the school districts established for administrative purposes by the department. [L 1996, c 89, pt of §2]

A decentralized system with formalized LEAs might require some modification in the powers and duties of the superintendent.

[§302A-1111] Duties of superintendent.

- (a) Under policies established by the board, the superintendent shall be designated as the chief executive officer of the public school system having jurisdiction over the internal organization, operation, and management of the public school system, as provided by law; and shall administer programs of education and public instruction throughout the State, including education at the preschool, primary, and secondary school levels, and such other programs as may be established by law.
- (b) Except as otherwise provided, the superintendent shall sign all drafts for the payment of moneys, all commissions and appointments, all deeds, official acts, or other documents of the department. The superintendent may use a printed facsimile signature in approving appointments, contracts, and other documents. The superintendent, at such time as may be prescribed by the board, shall present to the board full annual reports of the principal transactions within the department during the last completed year, which reports together with such recommendations as the board may think proper, shall be presented to the governor and the legislature. [L 1996, c 89, pt of §2]

The following section of the law provides flexibility to the department, but implies a continued involvement and authority by the departments of human resources development and budget and finance. If true power and authority were to be delegated to an LEA, the issue of overall DOE autonomy might need to be addressed, similar to the ongoing adjustments in the autonomy of the University of Hawai'i.

[§302A-1115] Reallocation of vacant positions.

- (a) To promote decentralization and facilitate restructuring of the department, the department of education, without regard to the position variance requirements of the department of budget and finance, may:
 - 1. Reallocate existing vacant positions throughout the department;
 - 2. Directly authorize and implement internal reorganization actions;
 - 3. Reassign employee duties;
 - 4. Authorize position classifications; and
 - 5. Conduct recruitment; provided that any action taken pursuant to this section shall be to redirect resources from the state and district offices to the individual schools and learning support centers.
- (b) The governor, the department of human resources development, and the department of budget and finance shall facilitate, expedite, and assist the department of education in the implementation of its decentralization and staffing reallocation plan.
- (c) The department of education shall submit an annual report of reallocations to the department of budget and finance by December 31 of each year. [L 1996, c 89, pt of §2]

- A review of the powers and duties of mainland state and local boards would be useful to compare Hawai'i's formal structure with others, and to explore other models. This would be helpful because all other states have both a statewide board and regional or mid-level boards.

4. What are the impacts of conflicting demands at the district offices for competence and expertise in compliance roles vs. subject area expertise and competence for school support roles?

- New rules, new roles. The *No Child Left Behind Act* has created a moving target of new expectations, federal laws, federal rules, and state implementation strategies. Keeping up with these changes is a challenge.
- Critical Ally Teams and Resource Teams. The Complex Area Superintendents and their staffs are going to be serving as assessment teams for school improvements, and also engaged in providing resources for needed changes. This is in itself a new role and a dual role. In other jurisdictions, these functions are carried out by different groups of people. On the one hand, these teams will be acting as an extension of BOE and State policy directives. On the other hand, they will be acting as friendly helpers to assist compliance with those directives. It is not clear how the schools will view these possibly contradictory roles.
- No standardized MQs or training for compliance role. It is one thing to learn about the rules; it is another to formulate a position description, minimum qualifications and ongoing training for the compliance functions. Given the current shortage of qualified administrators and teachers, and the expected retirement of large numbers in the near future, it is likely that these roles will be filled by retirees, who have a completely different perspective than one of seeking compliance.
- The need to recreate subject matter support. The new emphasis on certain subject matter high-stake test scores will put a new premium on activities that improve teaching in those areas (math, science, and reading). The district offices currently do not have subject area specialists, and may need to employ individuals who can provide this service to schools and teachers. In a budgetary environment where additional funds are not forthcoming, it is more likely that these tasks will be added to the jobs of other personnel, who are now performing compliance roles.

5. What incentives are available to enhance the meaningful engagement of the community at an LEA level?

Any complete list will require research on the many strategies or models throughout the nation. The following is a sample of some of these strategies:

- Creation of a governing or advisory board. Whether elected or appointed, a visible group of people might have an obvious role in holding public meetings, keeping public minutes, soliciting public input, and communicating public policy. The shift from individual administrators to a board or committee may be an important strategy for creating a more open or transparent system.

- Election of board members is one popular strategy. Research on elected local boards indicates that electoral politics, often unrelated to educational policy, can be a dominant factor. Competition over partisan, ethnic, or other minority representation has a long history of influence on school boards. Rifts over policy at the neighborhood level might well divide the community.
- Appointment of stakeholder representatives is an alternative strategy. This is basically the system now used for Hawai‘i’s SCBM councils and charter school boards. Theoretically, it creates more participation, but limits it to those with the most knowledge and interest.
- Delegation of significant powers to a board. One reason why Honolulu’s Neighborhood Board meetings are often poorly attended by the public is that they have few significant powers. A board with real and specific power attracts more citizen interest. Powers that might be delegated to an LEA Board might include the allocation of block grants or lump sum budgets, selection of key administrators, selection of a site for a school, etc. (See above section on the potential role of an LEA).
- Intergenerational programs that bring retirees on to school campuses are growing in popularity. They appear to benefit both the seniors and the students. This may be a potentially promising strategy for linking the community because of a large number of baby boomer retirees with time on their hands.
- After school programs. Some schools have developed robust community partnerships to create campus-based programs after the regular school day with activities designed to keep students out of trouble and engaged in positive learning and enrichment. Community involvement would obviously be a key to this endeavor.
- Community centers. To the extent a school campus can become a gathering place for adults after the regular hours of instruction, the community might feel comfortable in visiting the school, and perhaps take a greater sense of ownership.
- Outreach education. Vocational education, school-to-work programs, and other initiatives that reach out to the community as a larger context for education are another important strategy. A variation on this strategy is the creation of thematic schools within schools, such as the Farrington Health Academy, or development of career paths that require frequent interaction with community businesses and employers.

6. What incentives are available to enhance the meaningful integration of complex-level collaboration for a coherent curriculum and other “best” practices?

A review of most promising or “best” educational practices, strategies, and structures needs to be done and this should be matched with a similar search for effective incentives used by school systems to encourage positive change. A few promising areas in which both promising reforms and incentives might be found include:

- Partnerships with the University. Because the evaluation and development of quality educational materials requires a focused and sustained effort, a true

collaboration between the DOE statewide offices, the University, and a complex level decision making structure might be beneficial.

- Reduction of paperwork. The more administrators and teachers must use their non-instructional time to fill out forms or collect data, the less time, energy and interest they might devote to curriculum and instruction issues.
- Time to plan and discuss. Administrators and teachers may need additional time to plan and discuss concerns over new educational approaches. This might imply not only a greater need for collaborative meetings, but also a need to focus those meetings on substantive educational issues.
- Complex-wide workshops and meetings. Additional time and per diem to meet and work as a complex unit on meaningful education quality issues might be considered.
- Financial incentives. Collective financial incentives and rewards for the personnel in schools and complexes that effectively implement promising reforms in a timely manner might be considered. These might not be for individuals, a potentially divisive influence, but for entire school or complex administrators and faculty.
- Opportunities for renewal. Burnout and early retirement of both administrators and teachers are realities for many systems, including Hawai'i's. In the university world, professors routinely avoid burnout through the mechanism of sabbaticals, where they renew their interest and passion in their areas of expertise, and take a needed break from teaching. A similar program might be used for experienced teachers, perhaps inviting them to work as mentors and workshop facilitators for their complexes during a scheduled "sabbatical."
- Student learning time. Attention might be given to *A Day In The Life* of a student, as well as a week in the life, and a year in the life. When schools operate on a regimented factory-style schedule, there is a tendency to begin and end the day all at once. There might also be a tendency to pit one set of learning experiences against others because the school day or week is too short. The need for remedial or tutorial intervention as required by No Child Left Behind might also crowd out a comprehensive curriculum if the student's time on campus is not extended. This might need to be done without adding to the workload of teachers, and might well require more aggressive and creative community partnerships.

7. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of Hawai'i's school-level stakeholder representative SCBM councils, and how might this change with a new emphasis on the complex or Area Complex?

Strengths of the SCBM Councils

- A commitment to share power. The creation of the SCBM system represents an important high-level policy decision to decentralize authority and responsibility in the DOE system.
- A political agreement. The composition of the councils represents an important political agreement among stakeholders as to representation and process.

- Inclusion of key players. The creation of SCBM status requires significant “buy-in” by stakeholders at the school level.
- Creation of flexibility. The SCBM status permits the school to seek waivers to otherwise inflexible state regulations.
- Community input. The SCBM council’s are the only formalization of community input below the level of the Statewide Board Of Education.
- Acceptance by the educational community. The SCBM movement has grown in popularity, where over 80% of Hawai‘i’s public schools have an SCBM council.
- Local lessons learned. The experiences of the Hawai‘i SCBM councils have created a body of knowledge about what works and doesn’t work in Hawai‘i, the strengths and weaknesses, of school based management.
- State-by-State comparisons. Our SCBM school management system allows Hawai‘i to begin to compare the roles and effectiveness of Hawai‘i’s model with the experiences of mainland models.

Weaknesses of the SCBM Councils

- Uneven performance. The engagement and full participation of stakeholders on an SCBM council are uneven and subject to the personalities, agendas and leadership qualities of the school principal and other participants.
- Lack of continuity. As children move from elementary to middle to high school, parental participation “ages out” with the kids. A great parent leader at an elementary school will not be automatically included when their child enters middle school. Also, turnover among teachers and administrators creates additional breaks in the effectiveness and collaboration at the SCBM level.
- Unclear niche. SCBM councils have not been provided with clear guidance as to what their role is in the overall system, and how a particular school relates to other schools in a complex.
- Not the magic bullet. In spite of this decentralized form of school based management, political leaders and policy makers continue to call for other forms of decentralization, and have concluded that SCBM was not an effective reform.
- Inadequate resources. Without adequate resources, SCBM councils and school-level decision-making is less than optimal.
- Competition with other councils. In communities where there is already a sense of culture and legitimate mechanisms for collective input and decision making, the school’s SCBM councils may represent a complication or intrusion. A similar situation arose with the City and County’s Vision Teams, which diminished the authority and role of some Neighborhood Boards. In the example cited above for community alienation, the Waianae Coast has traditionally enjoyed a number of community-based organizations, including a council of Hawai‘i elders. If the membership of the SCBM council is different from these organizations, a sense of competition could develop.

Potential Changes to SCBM with a Formalized LEA

- Creation of leadership pools for complex or district-level decision-making bodies (LEAs). Using the SCBM stakeholder representation model, a Complex-level LEA Council could be made up of selected representatives from the various school SCBM councils in the complex.
- Opportunities for potential leadership training. Teachers and parents would “enter” the DOE decision making system at the school-based SCBM council level, and perhaps be “trained” before being selected or elected to sit on the Complex or District Councils.
- Loss of some authority and prestige. Certain decisions best made at the complex or district level would need to be removed from the school SCBM agenda such as the choice of a yearly school schedule, linkages between pre-K, elementary, middle, and high schools, or selection of an integrated curriculum for certain core subjects.
- Removal of some inappropriate responsibilities. Not all school-based SCBM tasks are welcomed or able to be effectively resolved or implemented. The creation of a complex or district level decision making authority could clarify and re-focus the school SCBM councils and allow them to be more effective for individual school-centered issues.
- Demand for joint school SCBM meetings. Because the complex or district level agenda will require more collaboration, it is likely that the demand to make time to meet and work with other school-based SCBM council members will likely increase. Conversely, school SCBM councils will be less isolated from the system.
- Broader community involvement. An LEA at the complex level would create a more comprehensive relationship between the overall community, its organizations, businesses and residents, and the entire range of schools. Intergenerational programs that bring seniors into the schools could be coordinated among the various schools. The opportunity to select a “lead” non-profit partner for major grants would also be more likely through an LEA model.

8. What are the powers and duties of Hawai‘i’s Charter School Boards, and do they represent a useful model for establishing a mid-level LEA?

- Thoughtful vision process. Charter Schools must create a charter document that outlines their vision of education. While this is similar to the so-called Standards Implementation Design (SID) for each public school, the charters must be reviewed and approved before the charter is accepted. This process might be interpreted as requiring a more thoughtful and intense discussion of educational goals and approaches.
- Thoughtful choice of educational approach. The Charter must also identify in some detail the educational and pedagogical approach to be used by a school. Public schools often do not engage in such in-depth discussions and choices.

- Thoughtful selection of a governance structure. Although the stakeholder boards that govern charter schools follow a similar model as SCBM, they do have more flexibility in creation of this governance structure.
- More general authority. The Charter boards have more powers than the SCBM councils. In effect, the charter boards share some of the same powers now held by the state Board of Education. A charter school principal reports to his or her charter board, and not to the DOE or the BOE.
- Flexibility in No Child Left Behind. The State of Hawai'i has identified several key goals that must be met. Most of the public schools are given guidance and directives as to how to accomplish these. Charter schools, however, are left up to their own methods as to how to meet these same goals. Of course, they must still conduct regular testing, and will be measured by similar standards.
- Exempt for the state procurement code. Certain bureaucratic and cumbersome procedures, such as those imposed on most state departments by the procurement code, are not imposed on charters, although they must set up their own accountability system.
- Board has true authority over principals and other personnel. The job descriptions, employment, appointment, promotion, transfer, demotion and discharge of all offers and employers are under the authority of the board, subject to applicable personnel laws and collective bargaining agreements. This would place the charter schools in the same role as many independent smaller school districts on the mainland. Hawai'i charter schools are empowered to negotiate separate contracts with personnel.
- More flexibility, responsibility and accountability. Taken as a whole, the above attributes of Hawai'i's charter schools, if used as a model for an LEA level governance structure, might appear to move the system in the direction of many U.S. mainland district governance structures.

9. What are the implications of a policy that would emphasize an educational continuum starting at pre-school and moving all the way up into college?

- Pre-K services. The capacity of a given geographical community to provide quality pre-K child care and educational enrichment services might need to be assessed and nurtured.
- Pre-K / elementary school links. Relationships between the preschool service delivery organizations and the elementary schools might need to be nurtured and developed to ensure that the preschool organizations were adequately preparing children for formal schooling, and that the schools were adequately prepared to accept the diversity of children from a particular community.
- Adequate funding. State or district-wide commitments of resources for the linkage between preschool and kindergarten might become more prominent issues. Tax credits and other strategies to assist poorer parents might be considered.
- Diversity of students accommodated. The particular mixture of disadvantaged students (special education, economically needy, limited English, etc.) might need to be addressed in the preschool and early school curricula within a complex. In

addition, cultural learning preferences and contexts might also be a factor in the delivery of services.

- Quality of teaching. Major initiatives to develop high quality curricula, materials, and techniques for integrated special education students might become higher priorities.
- Coordinated curricula. The coordination of sequential curricula and materials among all the schools in a community/complex might become a more important factor in the public schools, as well as teacher training at the college level.
- Elementary to middle school links. New and creative initiatives linking elementary and middle school teachers and administrators would be needed to ensure that students moving up the complex school pipeline experienced a seamless transition to middle schools, and to further ensure that middle schools were not overburdened with students from widely disparate elementary school experiences. This is particularly important because the structure of the classroom – one teacher for most subjects at the elementary school, changes to a structure of specialized teachers in middle school.
- Middle / high school links. Similar initiatives would also become important for the transition from middle to high schools. Because of the age and development of these students, and because the middle and high schools both educate through specialists, these linkages might be quite different from the elementary to middle school linkages.
- High school / college links. The linkages from high school to college might be the most difficult, primarily because not all high school graduates go on to college, they attend a wide variety of institutions, and ID markers are typically different for high school students (there is a separate DOE number) and other adult learners (most colleges still utilize the social security numbers). Obviously a new data tracking system would be helpful.

The high school-college linkage however might be greatly enhanced through collaborations with the University of Hawai'i system, particularly those faculty, instructors and programs that work mostly with college freshmen. New programs such as Running Start and other advanced placement opportunities might be vehicles to expand the interaction between college and high school faculty, even to the extent of co-teaching cohorts at both levels. In addition, the need for quality tutors under the No Child Left Behind Act might offer opportunities to utilize college lecturers and faculty interested in working with high school students before they enter college.

- Parental involvement. Should the P-20 model take hold as an important feature of a community/complex level LEA system, it might be possible to engage greater segments of the community (organizations, businesses, retirees, etc.) in a P-20 support effort, one that also made the transition for parents from preschool to elementary to middle to high school and even to college. Parental involvement is often cited as a key to educational success, yet the current system is difficult for parents to be part of a continuous or seamless support system from school to school.

10. How do the above questions relate to previous efforts by groups such as the Act 238 Collaborative, the 2002 Joint senate-House Education Reform, and, the Civic Forum?

- The 2002 Joint Senate-House Education Reform Task Force explored a number of key questions, such as school budgeting and finance, the roles and responsibilities of the various levels of school governance in Hawai‘i, community partnerships, and quality teaching and schools. Many of their discussions and recommendations for consideration are pertinent to the issue of SEA/LEA governance.

(See this link for documents:

<http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/site1/senate/members/newsletters/sakamoto/index.htm>)

Among the pertinent findings were:

- 1) A greater emphasis on the school complex as a unit of comprehensive reform might be productive.
 - 2) The clarification of roles, particularly those at the various levels of governance, might allow educational leaders and stakeholders to concentrate on their primary functions and remove other less important tasks that compete for time, energy and focus.
 - 3) The issues of time management for schooling (day, week, year) are a problem when left to each individual school, but might be better dealt with in the context of a complex.
 - 4) Education/community partnerships were difficult when left to a fragmented system where each school made their own arrangements.
 - 5) Policy makers found it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of current levels of funding when most budgets were depicted at a statewide level.
-
- The Act 238 Collaborative, was a community-driven attempt to flesh out accountability measures for Hawai'i's schools, focused primarily on outcomes that respected the current governance structure.
 - The Civic Forum, an independent community effort, emphasizes the importance of community involvement, the complex as a unit of reform, and the need for smaller schools.