



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

TESTIMONY

H.B. 841, S.D.1: RELATING TO EDUCATION

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Ways and Means

March 31, 2005

By

Randy Hitz
Dean
College of Education
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Chair Taniguchi, Vice Chair Tsutsui, and Members of the
Committee:

The University of Hawaii supports the intent of H.B. 841
S.D.1, but has some serious reservations and concerns. We
briefly present our overall impressions in this testimony
and attached a more comprehensive analysis by Dr. Frank
Pottenger of the College of Education.

Part II

The intent of Part II of the bill to directly and concretely
support the civic responsibility development of students K-
12 is laudable and critical to the future of our state and
nation. It is intended to provide funding to fill a current
curricular void. However, we believe this resolution could
be greatly strengthened by:

1. Recognizing the need for a guiding statement of
standards such as the National Standards for Civics
Education.
2. Recognizing the role of the total curriculum in
preparing students to undertake civic responsibilities.
3. Considering the enormity of the task of placement and
articulation of new content in the total curriculum of the
multi-levels of school complexes.
4. Referencing the interface of diverse cultural values
with rights and responsibilities in preparation for entering
the arena of civic participation.
5. Recognizing the role of tertiary educational
institutions needed for program articulation, curriculum
development, and teacher training.

In summary, the intent of the bill is praiseworthy; however,

the actions called for in the bill are fragmented and premature. If developing a citizen capable of considered participation in the ever-changing dynamics of civic responsibility is a goal of Hawai'i's public schools as envisioned in ACT 51, then careful consideration must be given to a comprehensive curriculum design. The task of conceptualizing such a curriculum should precede any other action. The product design should be conceived as a P-20 undertaking, articulated with preschool and tertiary education.

Part III

The intent of Part III of the bill to develop maximum learning in all students is a common goal of all educators. However, the approach advanced by the bill to use curriculum like the Core Knowledge program throughout the public school system of Hawai'i presents problems. Though the bill calls for the implementation of a program "like" Core Knowledge, in the absence of such a similar program, comments will address the structure of the model Core Knowledge program published by E. D. Hirsch.

A precipitous adoption of Core Knowledge-like programs "throughout the public school system of Hawai'i" would be an act of ill-considered disruption of the existing program at a time when teachers are overwhelmed with adjustments to No Child Left Behind legislation. The negative consequence of this proposed legislation could take years to repair. Neither Core Knowledge schools reporting on the internet, nor the Core Knowledge Foundation in Virginia, offers rigorous comparative experimental evaluation of the benefits of the program. The foundation states that it is in some 700 schools in 48 States. This is a modest claim in a nation of hundreds of thousands of elementary schools. Before being legislatively imposed, an assessment of the impact of such a program on present practices should be made, and any Core Knowledge-like program should be evaluated here in Hawai'i, in terms of that program's capacity to better promote learning in Hawai'i's special student population.

ANALYSIS OF
H.B. 841, S.D.1: RELATING TO EDUCATION
March 31, 2005

Analysis of Part II

In its present form, the bill is a weak validation of our nation's founding motivation for creation of public education; the developing in students the knowledge and skills necessary to carry out a citizen's civic responsibilities. Since Benjamin Franklin there has been agreement that students must gain the knowledge and skills to carry out the tasks of society and to think through and act upon the problems of societal maintenance and modification. This bill fails to recognize that in these times of testing of our democratic will, commitment to civic education must begin in preschool and carry on through graduate school into the times of continuing education. In the parlance of today, a curriculum for civic responsibility requires a P-20 perspective. The intent of this legislation is not at issue; it is its narrow scope and the simplistic approach of supporting a potentially trivial curricular patchwork to create profound results that is in question.

1. To get a measure of the inadequacy of the bill, it is important to review the National Standards for Civics Education. They call for schooling that addresses five questions:

- What is citizenship?
- What are the rights of citizenship?
- What are the responsibilities of citizenship?
- How can citizens take part in civic life?
- What are the dispositions that enhance citizen effectiveness and promote the healthy functioning of American constitutional society? These include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual responsibility • Self-discipline /self-governance • Courage • Civility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect for the rights of others • Respect for law • Honesty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open mindedness • Critical mindedness • Negotiation and compromise |
|---|--|--|

As conceived by the drafters, the five questions are designed to guide student engagement with content drawn from across the curriculum, current events, and experiences in the community. It is understood that students are citizens and have growing responsibilities to society as they gain knowledge about society,

including the role of their schooling. Answering the last two questions requires substantive participation in processes of civic life and emersion in the behaviors that characterize the dispositions that enhance the healthy functioning of our society. Failure to recognize this seminal work or some other considered document or statement of principles on which to base development of "lesson plans, curriculum, and materials opens the door to dangerous political bias and propaganda.

2. The national standards support a concept of civics that embraces the entire K-12 curriculum. They endorse the idea that adequate civics curriculum should not only deal with legal and moral rights and responsibilities of citizenship but also with the knowledge applicable to the experience of work and other contributions to social well-being. Most important, it calls for schooling in the civic dispositions that enhance effective social interaction.
3. A question not considered in the bill, but essential to turning legislation into reality is how can a curriculum committed to development of civic responsibility be fitted into the multi-levels of our district complex structure, and how can it fit into the school's allocated instructional time? It is in considering of these questions that the magnitude of the task touched on by the present bill becomes apparent. There are ways of achieving the intent of the bill, but these must be carefully designed. Some possible design approaches:
 - (a) Treat the total public school K-12 curriculum as a Civics Curriculum.
 - (b) Recognize that each subject is providing experience that is shaping the student for work and participation in our democratic society.
 - (c) Build on the recognition that disciplinarians give allegiance to the same disposition called for in the Civic Standards and ensure that students practice these behaviors through the classroom experience of being disciplinary novices.
 - (d) Make students aware from their first contact with public education that they are already responsible participants in society and are expected to act with civility and order and attend to sanitation, conservation, and aesthetics as well as provide service to school, family and the common weal.
 - (e) Include provision for articulation of subject matter so that there is an intentional construction of understanding of the functions and structure of our economy and government starting with primary school study of family, school, and the community beyond.
4. No provision is made for representation of the multiple and diverse cultures that constitute societal Hawai'i and their contribution to a civically responsible community.

It is indeed a narrow interpretation of civic responsibility if these groups are excluded.

5. Assuming that this bill can only address the needs of K-12 schooling, it follows that since the disciplines of knowledge provide the subject matter substance of schooling, members of disciplinary communities should be engaged in consultation on the creation of this new curriculum. There are members of the state's tertiary institutions that have considerable experience in producing curriculum applicable to the proposed effort, and they could be called upon for consultative support and engagement in actual development. If a curricular program is to be supported by the legislature, coordination and liaison with tertiary teacher-training units should be required. In the current draft disciplinary and tertiary education representation is not envisioned.
6. Though there is a long-standing need for textbooks, the association of textbook purchase with this bill indicates an assumption that the curricular needs can be simply satisfied by the purchase of new books. Again it is emphasized that a program focusing on civic responsibility should be viewed as an across-the-curriculum undertaking and the textbook needs for all subject matter areas should be considered.

Analysis of Part III

The Core Knowledge program has two features that differentiate it: (a) an annotated list of topics that have been identified, with considerable hubris, as the knowledge that students should know at each grade level, and (b) a pedagogy that is strongly rooted in rote learning.

1. Concerning content:

- As learned from a Google search of user comments, Core Knowledge provides a set of content goals K-4 and is a "work in progress in Grades 5-8." Further, users point out it is up to a district or teacher to shape those goals into lesson plans. It is submitted that the development of such plans for the five areas of the curriculum included in the program would be an enormous task.
- Studying of the outline of the materials shows that there is a cultural and historical bias for Europe and the Americas. The heritages of the majority of people of Hawai'i are not represented in these books, and this deficiency extends to accounts of music and the plastic and graphic arts.

- In the foreword of his books Hirsch disdains educators' concern for developmental readiness. This creates major problems. For example in the first- grade book he uses historical content that requires students to project thousands of years into the past before they have developed more than a primitive sense of time past and future or have developed the concept of thousands. Grade 1 math students are to work between numbers 0 and 100. The historical content presented in great detail in Core Knowledge for developmental reasons is studied in Hawai'i from grade 5 and on. The problem is confounded by fact that materials are written for adult readers, not students.
- Science that has its origins in experience with phenomena is reduced to unconnected descriptions. The National Science Standards characterize science as inquiry and science education as learning through the experience of investigating real phenomena. Without the experience of rediscovering the concepts that constitute science today, students are unable to understand how the discipline of science works, and there is no part of the Core Knowledge program that promotes this. This objection can be applied to the way all of the disciplines are treated in Core Knowledge. Hirsh tells a disconnect story about science factoids. The science content selected for represented at each grade level does not align with National Science or State of Hawai'i Science Standards. Alignment with state standards in all subject mater areas would be a major problem.

2. Concerning pedagogy:

- Online accounts of those who have used the Core Knowledge materials in their lesson planning speak of employing methods other than pure rote instruction; however, the materials are designed for rote memorization. Research shows that many, if not a majority, of students do not respond well to instruction that is primarily rote.
- Much of the program is designed for the teacher to read to the students. This is a limited pedagogy particularly for the student first gaining access to language skills.
- If civic responsibility is to become a central theme in our state's curriculum, students must have the opportunity to interact. It is through interpersonal interaction modeled in experience in the disciplines of knowledge that the dispositions enhancing citizenship

are gained: honesty, critical mindedness, civility, and others. Core Knowledge makes the teacher the authoritative deliverer of knowledge, the expert delivering intellectual gems to the uninitiated.

- Be it not forgotten that by doing work as a disciplinarian students do learn how to gain access to knowledge through their own efforts. This "learning to learn" is decried by Hirsch, even though it is the basic way students learn to apply knowledge.