

JAN 1 9 2007

A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. (a) The legislature finds that smaller school
2 environments are of great advantage to teachers, students, and
3 parents. Hawaii has explored smaller learning communities in
4 the past by considering various reforms, including "turning
5 points" in 1989, "breaking ranks" in 1996, and approaching
6 interested foundations such as the Annenberg Foundation and the
7 Gates Foundation. However, Hawaii has not been able to
8 implement a system-wide smaller learning community initiative.

9 (b) The legislature also finds that research and
10 experience indicate that smaller schools enable teachers to
11 create more personalized relationships with students, leading to
12 learning opportunities based upon students' needs and interests.
13 Smaller schools provide an ideal environment for project-based
14 and place-based learning, ranging from class-based, teacher-
15 designed projects to whole school design.

16 Project-based learning is distinct from the typical
17 classroom experience in that it is holistic in scope and depth



1 and affords students a choice in their learning through teacher-
2 developed projects or student-derived projects. Project-based
3 learning and place-based learning is distinguishable from the
4 typical classroom experience in the following ways:

- 5 (1) They are holistic in scope and depth: students see a
6 project from start to finish in both a linear and
7 cyclical process;
- 8 (2) They offer students a choice in learning in both
9 teacher-developed projects and student-derived
10 projects;
- 11 (3) Place-based learning typically incorporates elements
12 of service learning and environmental education with a
13 project-based structure. Problem-based education,
14 modeled after the medical profession, emphasizes skill
15 building through real-world challenges;
- 16 (4) Project-based learning is a natural way to do cross-
17 disciplinary work within the classroom or school, as
18 students are encouraged to look at learning in a new
19 way, and incorporates state and national standards
20 seamlessly by pulling standards out of the project,
21 not the project out of the standards; and



1 (5) Project-based learning builds trust between staff and
2 students because students are given a voice, and
3 teachers are put in a place of learning right
4 alongside students. Students utilize their personal
5 knowledge, express their culture, build on their
6 strengths, and validate their passions. Learning
7 becomes more enjoyable.

8 (c) The legislature further finds that the department of
9 education, facilitated by various grants, has explored schools-
10 within-schools, but it has not created a major smaller learning
11 community initiative. In addition, Act 298, Session Laws of
12 Hawaii 2006, enacted the public charter schools law, codified as
13 chapter 302B, Hawaii Revised Statutes, which does not provide
14 for smaller learning communities.

15 The department of education is considering the potential
16 cost savings of consolidating smaller schools. Cost savings
17 appear to be a higher priority than the research-documented
18 benefits of smaller learning communities. The legislature finds
19 that the cost savings approach to school consolidation is
20 irrational in the face of overwhelming evidence that small
21 schools are beneficial to students. Various authoritative
22 educational studies have found that students in smaller schools:



- 1 (1) Are more academically successful than those in larger
- 2 schools;
- 3 (2) Have higher graduation rates;
- 4 (3) Are more likely to take advanced-level courses, and to
- 5 participate in extracurricular activities.

6 The purpose of this Act is to establish the framework for
7 the department of education to implement smaller learning
8 communities.

9 SECTION 2. Chapter 302A, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
10 amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and
11 to read as follows:

12 "PART . SMALLER LEARNING COMMUNITIES

13 §302A- Purpose. The purpose of this part is to
14 establish smaller learning communities consisting of smaller
15 schools. Smaller learning communities greatly enhance the
16 achievement of students, including but not limited to, higher
17 grades, test scores, and college admissions, and better prepares
18 students for the workplace.

19 §302A- Establishment of policy. It shall be the policy
20 of the department to provide for the establishment of smaller
21 learning communities within existing schools or school



1 districts, which shall have priority over the cost savings of
2 consolidating or closing schools.

3 **§302A- Guidelines.** The following guidelines shall apply
4 to achieve the establishment of smaller learning communities
5 through smaller schools:

6 (1) Cost savings or enrollment shall not be the priority
7 in closing or consolidating school facilities;

8 (2) Prior to closing or consolidating school facilities,
9 the department shall determine if there is a private
10 provider willing to build early childhood education
11 facilities, as provided in section 302A-1506.5;

12 (3) Prior to the sale of school lands, as provided under
13 section 302A-1151, the department shall determine if
14 the school land or building is suitable for other
15 educational purposes, including but not limited to,
16 establishment of a smaller learning community or an
17 early childhood education facility operated by a
18 private provider;

19 (4) Prior to closing a smaller school, the department
20 shall assist that school to become a conversion
21 charter school, as defined in section 302B-1;



1 (5) The department shall explore alternate methods of
2 realizing cost savings, in lieu of closing or
3 consolidating school facilities, including sharing of
4 administrative support and specialized teachers among
5 schools within the same district; and

6 (6) Prior to consolidation of school facilities, the
7 department shall obtain input of the parents and
8 faculty of an affected school.

9 §302A- **Creation of smaller learning communities in**
10 **existing schools.** No later than January 1, 2009, the department
11 shall develop a plan for each middle, intermediate, and high
12 school having an enrollment of more than 1,500 students, to
13 create smaller learning communities within the school.

14 §302A- **Creation of e-learning.** Each school district
15 shall develop a plan to utilize e-learning, encompassing
16 computer-enhanced learning, web-based teaching materials, and
17 virtual learning, to enhance and create more personalized
18 learning environments.

19 As used in this section, "virtual learning" means a managed
20 learning environment in which all aspects of a course are
21 handled through a consistent user interface standard throughout
22 the grade level."



1 SECTION 3. Section 302A-1151, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended to read as follows:

3 " ~~[+]§302A-1151[+]~~ **Sale of school lands unnecessary for**
4 **school purposes.** The chairperson of the board of land and
5 natural resources ~~[is hereby requested]~~, upon the recommendation
6 and approval of the superintendent, ~~[to]~~ shall sell any state
7 lands, including the buildings thereon, once used but no longer
8 necessary for school purposes~~[+]~~ and without the potential of
9 being used for other educational purposes."

10 SECTION 4. Section 302A-1506.5, Hawaii Revised Statutes,
11 is amended to read as follows:

12 " ~~[+]§302A-1506.5[+]~~ **Early childhood education facilities;**
13 **identifying sites~~[+]~~; closing or consolidation.** (a) The
14 department of education shall identify unused public school
15 facilities for use by early childhood education programs.
16 Suitable empty classrooms, as determined by the department,
17 shall be inventoried for potential use in early childhood
18 education programs. Priority shall be given to facilities on
19 sites with sufficient space for three or more classrooms to be
20 renovated or constructed.



1 (b) The department shall assist in the identification of
2 possible construction sites for private providers to build early
3 childhood education facilities.

4 (c) The department shall give priority to the application
5 of this section as a condition precedent to the closing or
6 consolidation of unused or underutilized school facilities."

7 SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed
8 and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

9 SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

10

INTRODUCED BY: Norman Satemuf



Report Title:

Education; Smaller Learning Communities

Description:

Provides for smaller learning communities in public schools. Prohibits the selling of school lands and buildings without consideration of using the land and buildings for small learning communities. Requires the department of education to give priority to establishing early learning facilities over closing or consolidating school facilities.

