

Student Instructional Hours and School Year Requirements: *Addendum*

for Konawaena Middle School (#376)

Konawaena Schools Complex, Kealahou, Hawaii

To the Honorable Members of the Hawai'i Board of Education:

Please find attached the Addendum to the *Waiver Request for Modified Student Instructional Hours and School Year Requirements* for Konawaena Middle School.

In compliance with the BOE's approved Policy 2413 (7/16/13), the following areas aligned with the school's Academic and Financial Plan have been addressed:

Any school requesting a waiver shall ensure that such waiver aligns with its Academic and Financial Plan and demonstrate, with specificity:

(1) the circumstances unique to the school justifying the waiver;

The request for this Waiver is unique in the fact that it is child-centered and makes learners the priority, rather than focusing on professional development for its teachers. Thus, we are not requesting a waiver from education, but rather a waiver for students.

Konawaena Middle School (KMS) has operated in name and philosophy as a middle level-learning environment since 1995, aligning practices relevant to early adolescents as outlined in *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council, 1990) and *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1995). Foundational practices of any middle school include: advisory, teaming, interdisciplinary units, heterogeneous and flexible groupings, exploratory classes, performance-based experiences, and authentic and alternate assessment practices. All methods are incorporated into KMS' programming, with the latter two descriptors fueling this Waiver request, and subsequent Addendum.

KMS encourages students, within teams, to compile evidence of their learning and to showcase these skills during Student-Led Conferences and through performance-based projects such as *Ka Honua Maoli* (7th grade) and *Kulia I Ka Nu'u* (8th grade). These projects require the learners to accumulate evidence of standards-based content and GLOs' progression, by acquiring and applying new learning/knowledge across subject areas. These projects bring parents, community members, and KMS staff into the school setting, on a Waiver Day, to authenticate the learning experiences of our middle school learners. It prepares them for stepping into high school, as well as post-secondary arenas. These projects serve as *exit* indicators of the progress each student has made during the year.

Students at KMS present in three formats: 6th graders do a whole team project based on international cultures (no Waiver); while 7th graders present "Real Life" portfolios in a round table format with community members; and 8th graders conduct a solo presentation of their research findings and mentoring or service learning experiences before a community panel. The projects' expectations increase as the learners progress through middle school.

In order to support the culminating presentations for 7th and 8th graders, two requested Waiver days have been granted and utilized for the last 12 years. And, in order to demonstrate integrity, respect, as well as instill professionalism into the student presenters, the school provides a conference-like atmosphere on campus, without the hustle & bustle of other students, bells ringing, or normal daily distractions. The outcomes and experiences have been phenomenal, as well as noted "Commendations" by visiting accreditation committee members (KMS Self-Study Report, WASC, 2011).

Finally, justification for requesting the aforementioned Waiver specifies only 1 day of instruction is lost per grade level throughout the entire year. For example, on the first day of any school year 6th graders attend an Orientation day (non-Waiver), minus the 7th and 8th graders. During the *Ka Honua* Waiver Day, 6th & 8th graders stay home, while 7th graders present. And, likewise, on the *Kulia* Waiver Day 6th & 7th graders are absent, while 8th graders are in attendance. Finally, in each unique example, it would be a hard-pressed argument to find lack of learning or non-educational value associated with any of the days mentioned.

(2) significant harm to students' learning and students' achievement should the waiver not be granted;

Should the Waiver not be granted, an overhaul of how interdisciplinary, project-based practices are currently implemented would be necessary.

Not unlike high school exit projects, Master's theses and Doctoral dissertation defenses, the intent of the *Ka Honua* and *Kulia* projects deserve the same type of format and environments for learners to showcase their accomplishments. In fact, a generation of KMS students who have completed said exit projects, have gone on to fulfill the BOE's Diploma requirement by completing senior projects and/or presentations. Testimonies from former students regarding the lessons learned from *Ka Honua* helped them to make positive life choices, as well as their references made to the *Kulia* experience, which led them through a discovery process and uncovered interests evolving into career paths.

KMS has enhanced student achievement by providing opportunities for students to display their learning. Both of these projects are respectful to students as learners and as individuals—affording them venues to voice their acquired knowledge. To prepare them for a world that is complex, diverse and unpredictable, educational institutions must measure student achievement in addition to the range of standardized curriculum.

(3) the school's plan to exit the waiver and achieve full compliance with the statutory requirements;

At this time, KMS does not have a plan to exit the Waiver as the curriculum, instruction, assessment and programming affiliated with *Ka Honua* and *Kulia* is seamlessly linked to the Waiver days, as well as cited as an integral part of the school's Academic and Financial Plan (KMS, 2013) and the 2011 WASC Visiting Team's (KMS Self-Study Report, WASC, 2011).

Additionally, KMS' Academic & Financial Plan has aligned itself with the HIDOE's Strategic Plan, which demonstrates *Core Values* through the *Ka Honua* and *Kulia* projects. Under Goal 1: Student Success, Object 1C states: "Students are connected to their school and community to develop a love of learning and contribute to a vibrant civic life". At KMS, students are united with their families and communities through various activities/events such as Student-led Conferences and the Project-based "signature" projects known as *Ka Honua Maoli* and *Kulia I ka Nu'u* in order to achieve said goals. And, what better way for students to showcase their knowledge base than in front of family and community members who are of vested interest.

(4) whether the complex area superintendent and the superintendent concur with the request;

Complex Area Superintendent (CAS), Mr. Art Souza fully supports and endorses the performance-based projects *Ka Honua* and *Kulia* to be showcased on two Waiver Days (1 day per specified grade level alignment), and encouraged KMS to pursue the revised Waiver and Addendum requested by the HIBOE.

(5) whether other applicable processes noted in the Board Policy entitled "School Community Council Waivers and School Community Council Exceptions Policy" were completed;

Everything was completed per guidelines provided by the HIBOE, and submitted to SCC Office per timelines established.

(6) alternatives considered or implemented by the school prior to requesting the waiver.

Since the projects are annual, and most recently concluded last Spring 2013, no other alternatives have been implemented thus far. Nor have new alternatives been considered since the *Ka Honua* and *Kulia* projects have been successfully implemented for the last 16 years, and approved by Waivers for the last 12 years.

In the event the Waiver is denied, and alternative plans need to be proposed the following suggestions, although with inconveniences and drawbacks, have been included:

- a) Present projects in a classroom setting. Lacks whole KMS staff involvement, is time consuming, and loses the feel of being "authentic". Distractions from other classes and students on campus, bells, and daily routines are disruptive.
- b) Present projects in a large structure within the school. School buildings like the gym or cafeteria service more than the middle school population (i.e. KMS shares facilities with Konawaena HS). Noise, distractions, inadequate time and lack of space for "staging areas" where students can prepare before presentations. Also lacks whole KMS staff involvement.
- c) Use off-campus site. Cost (for buses and site rental) would enter into the picture. There are few places in Kona that could accommodate two teams per grade level. Also lacks whole KMS staff involvement.

The faculty and staff of Konawaena Middle School humbly asks the Hawai'i Board of Education to carefully review the attached request as they convene for the August 6th meeting, and to take into consideration the impact a denial would have on the programming, student achievement, and morale of the KMS 'Ohana.

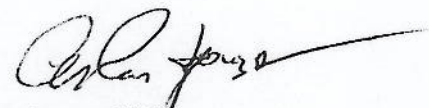
Mahalo --



Sandy Cameli, Ed.D.
District Resource Teacher
West Hawai'i Schools



Teddy Burgess, Principal
Konawaena Middle School



Art Souza, CAS
West Hawai'i Schools