

Testimony on 2030 Promise Plan Draft III  
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Aloha Board of Education Members,

My perspective comes from being a Teacher in public and private institutions for the past 50 years. I began teaching in the Fountain Valley School District in California in 1969. I have lived in Kona with my family since 1978.

I have observed that over those 50 years, our children have changed and are greatly influenced by the emerging world around them and those changes have brought many challenges to learning. When I look at the stagnant growth of academic skills, across grade levels and subject areas I am concerned. I am also concerned about the chronic absenteeism rate, and the number of students in special needs categories and their graduation rates. I was a third grade teacher for many years, I understand how critical it is that children have basic reading skills and math skills by that time.

Children today, have many new and different challenges to learning. Their level of “wellness” is important, their social emotional skills are critical, and their level of academic “engagement” is foundational. I understand that the 2030 Promise Plan seeks to “remedy” all of this.

But when I look at the past Indicators and the newer Indicators that are being added it just doesn’t hold together and make sense. In the area of Academic Achievement Indicators, when one wants to bring “change” to a system building on the old system that didn’t work and making it more complex and very “top heavy” (too much reliance on serving the top level of student performance) may not be the way to go. I can appreciate that you wanted to build new Indicators into the Plan based on feedback from the public, but your new Plan doesn’t hang together well, and most importantly doesn’t look like it is achievable.

At this point adding any more data collection points for teachers cannot possibly be a solution. Indicators are merely “trends” and make it difficult to produce the Outcomes you are looking for. I am concerned that the structure of this plan, the way it is “framed” will not lead you to the change you are seeking.

The Hawai'i Department of Education, being such a large institution, has challenges built-in to its institutional structure. Having a greater level of decision making at the Complex Area will hopefully be helpful, bring more funds for professional development to the complex area could also be helpful. School Design, Student Voice, integrating the HA Program into the Classroom, etc. hold promise.

Under the area of “Engagement” Increasing the School-Community Partnerships for ‘Aina-based education and stewardship are a new and potentially ground breaking area

that will certainly help to increase student wellness, reduce absenteeism, increase student engagement with project based and hands-on learning experiences, and connect our students to their “place” on this ‘Aina. I can’t see the outline of how this will actually occur, but I know that this new Indicator will be a game changer IF it can actually be implemented with support from the Department.

Obviously Hawaii’s Teachers need more support, greater pay, much more professional development geared to integration of these new areas into the day to day classroom curriculum. I don’t think the teacher externships with industry are important at this time.

Our High School Programs need development of Career Pathways that are NOT college bound. Increasing enrollment in Pre-K needs to have a funding base and institutional administration that don’t appear to be here right now. Developing classroom curriculum that includes real world problem solving, and more project based learning opportunities is a good idea, but who are the “industry” leaders here, does the Department know who they are?

Our world is changing so fast that the 5 C’s have become more critical than ever. Choice, Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, and Creativity must be woven into our Classrooms in new ways.

Lastly, one can only hope to change education by changing the level of professional development and experiences that support the Teachers. What is important for Teachers to know and “practice” that will help to engage Hawaii’s students in more meaningful ways, and allow them to become problem solvers of the vast sustainability problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? Thinking back to my college years, and the courses that led to my degrees in English, Music, and Education, there was little that actually prepared me for that first day in front of my students.

Your TEACHERS are your most important asset. What they are asked to do or not do, what type of support they are given, what PD opportunities are available, can change everything. In my first year of teaching my school was chosen to be the Pilot School for the conversion of the biological and physical sciences from K-6. My entire faculty worked with the National Science Foundation, the Lawrence Hall of Sciences at UC Berkeley, the University of California at Riverside, and the California State Department of Education for 3 months of the summer, 5 days a week, all day to prepare us to be the hands-on teachers of the SCIS (Science Curriculum Improvement Study) Program to be implemented. Even then, because NONE of us were educated in this new experiential hands-on way, even the 3 months of daily PD was not enough to really change the way we worked. We had to continue over the next 3 years, to receive more PD to move our teaching skills to a new level. That kind of commitment to the teachers is needed now. If you want them to be this or that, or work with the students in new ways they FIRST must understand and experience for themselves what these new areas entail.

I hope the DOE can find their way from the past to the future by investing heavily in their Teachers. Teachers are critical for Student Achievement, Community Engagement, and Access.

Mahalo for this Opportunity to share my thoughts.

Aloha,

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To: Hon. Catherine Payne, Chair  
Hon. Brian J. De Lima, Vice Chair  
Members of the State of Hawai‘i Board of Education

From: Alex Telnov, Ph.D.  
Honolulu, Hawaii

Written testimony, submitted on November 5, 2019  
for the Board of Education meetings on November 7, 2019

**in OPPOSITION to**

- 1) dangerous overuse of “Achievement Gaps” as indicators of school performance;**
- 2) overloading the 2030 Promise Plan with fanciful ideas – and the students’ K-12 experience with activities that are only tangentially related to education;**
- 3) continuing failure to bring the K-12 curriculum in sync with international standards and proven best practices, expectations of internationally competitive universities, and the needs of the increasingly globalized U.S. economy;**

**and ADVOCATING**

- 1) greatly increased use of Differentiated Instruction and Assessment;**
- 2) development of curriculum pathways that are consistent with world-class standards and the expectations of top-tier universities;**
- 3) bringing back Vocational Education as part of core curriculum in grades 6-12;**
- 4) strengthening pathways that are not college-bound and focus on job-ready skills;**
- 5) expanding and formalizing continuing education, professional development, and testing teachers, both in pedagogy and the subject matter they teach;**
- 6) competitive recruitment and retention of teachers, especially those with a degree in the subject they teach or a closely related field, particularly in STEM.**

Aloha Chair Payne, Vice Chair De Lima, and Members of the Board of Education:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to share with the Board some of my concerns about the current draft of the Department of Education’s 2030 Promise Plan, whose stated purpose is to guide Hawai‘i’s public school system through the coming decade.

Most of the items that I listed above are (or at least should be) self-evident and minimally controversial. In the interest of time and space, I will elaborate only on two of them.

## **Overuse and Misuse of “Achievement Gaps” as indicators of school performance**

Recall that a mere two centuries ago, the small ruling class of hereditary aristocracy had a virtual monopoly on education and wealth pretty much in all societies around the world. The genius idea of free, universal public schooling was spearheaded by Prussia in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and spread around the world over the next 150 years. Public schools became powerful engines of upward social and economic mobility: for the first time in human history, every child, regardless of origin or social class, could get an education and a fighting chance, through hard work and perseverance, to reach the highest levels in the society. In fact, nearly all U.S. Presidents in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century came from humble backgrounds and graduated from public high schools; so did a great number of Nobel laureates, financial executives, and early leaders of the Silicon Valley, including Bill Hewlett, David Packard, Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and many others. It is largely thanks to good public schools that middle class was able to arise and thrive in the United States and around the world.

However, there are clear signs that the “social elevator” function of public education has begun to malfunction sometime around 1980s. A new hereditary aristocracy is arising that seems to have a unique understanding of what and how needs to be taught to their children to place them into the right “feeder” high schools, nearly all of which are private and very expensive, and then into the narrow band of top colleges and graduate schools that produce a disproportionate fraction of entry-level hires for the best jobs in the nation.

Which brings me to the fallacy and extreme danger of overemphasizing the value of “achievement gaps” as performance indicators in a public school system.

During my college years, I dedicated three summers to working with talented high-school students from educationally underserved rural and remote areas of Siberia, Central Asia and the Far East, covering a territory that is as large as the United States and Canada combined. These kids came from an extremely wide range of backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances, and the variability of interests, aptitudes and abilities among them was truly amazing. Working with these students as a teacher and mentor, watching them rapidly grow and occasionally stumble, convinced me that these differences are to be embraced, not fought.

A differentiated approach works best when educating a group of students whose starting points and learning needs and styles are different. With this approach, performance of everyone in the group goes up, while “achievement gaps” tend to remain unchanged. On the other hand, attempts to force a diverse group of students into a single “Procrustean bed” are doomed to failure and may lead to tragic results.

Please carefully consider the following: bureaucracies are extremely good about adapting to whatever metrics are used to judge their performance. If the leading metric of good performance is a decrease in “achievement gaps”, the first thing the bureaucracy will do is divert a disproportionate share of resources to the lower quartile of students. When that becomes insufficient to show continuing “progress”, the bureaucracy may start to actively sabotage the top quartile, thus breaking the vital “social elevator” function of public schools

and feeding the vicious pipeline that leads to a mediocre and irrelevant college education, and then to a lifetime of bad jobs and crushing debt.

The other danger of going overboard in misguided efforts to beat down the “achievement gaps” is that it risks testing the students so much that they begin to hate school.

### **What the Plan misses**

The bulk of my criticism of the 2030 Promise Plan is aimed not at any of its specific components, but rather at the absence of many critically important elements that one would expect from such a document. Firstly, the Plan needs to clearly and honestly identify the most pressing problems with the status quo. Secondly, the Plan needs to clearly identify and quantify the progress it aims to achieve by 2030 (“the deliverables”). Last but not least, it would be extremely helpful if the Plan would describe what state of affairs in public K-12 education in Hawai‘i is the Plan’s authors’ aspirational goal. The Plan should also explain how each of its stated Promises and Action Opportunities would contribute to the progress targeted by 2030, and at what cost.

Presently, the 2030 Promise Plan appears to consist mostly of feel-good statements and promises, fashionable, unproven ideas, and soft goals. Despite my considerable professional expertise in relevant areas, I find only a precious few elements in the current Plan documents that are likely to have a non-negligible positive impact on our keiki’s readiness to become productive members of our increasingly complex society and the increasingly competitive global economy, where one cannot succeed without excellent skills in critical thinking, reading and writing, without a firm grasp of mathematics, the scientific method, world history, and the rights and responsibilities of a citizen.

For further inspiration on what the Department of Education’s strategic plan should include and aim for, I would like to direct its authors to two reports produced by the National Academies at the request of the U.S. Congress, co-authored by a team of distinguished scientists, university presidents and prominent CEOs: “Rising Above the Gathering Storm: Energizing and Employing America for a Brighter Economic Future” (2005) and “Rising Above the Gathering Storm, Revisited: Rapidly Approaching Category 5” (2010).<sup>1</sup>

### **Additional inspiration**

For additional inspiration, I would like to quote from two great Americans, both graduates of public high schools and colleges.

“... At the end of [high school] 14 percent of our students will have had algebra, geometry, and trigonometry. At the end of their high-school course, 100

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/11463>, <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/12999>

*percent of their students will have had algebra, geometry, and trigonometry plus the calculus which we don't get until we go to college.*

*In connection with the sciences, 25 percent of our high-school graduates have 1 year of physics; 100 percent of their high-school graduates have 5 years of physics. 33 percent of our high-school graduates have 1 year of chemistry; 100 percent of their graduates have 4 years of chemistry.*

*We are making our high-school course too easy. We are making it so easy that even the stupid boys can get through. That is seriously penalizing the bright boys and seriously penalizing us in the acquisition of the type of people that we need..."*

- Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, famous for the first air raid on Japan in April 1942, Chairman of the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics in 1957-58, during his November 16, 1957 testimony at the United States Senate on the needs of the U.S. satellite and missile programs.

*"If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves... We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament."*

- Prof. Glenn Seaborg, Nobel Prize in Chemistry for the discovery of plutonium and nine other trans-uranium elements, advisor to ten U.S. Presidents. The quote is from "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform", 1983.

Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Alex Telnov, Ph.D.  
Parent, scientist, educator, and community member



Robert Campbell <drsped.rc@gmail.com>

11/06/2019 10:58 AM

To testimony\_boe@notes.k12.hi.us

cc

Subject Testimony for 7 November Data  
Retreat and Community Meeting

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Chair Payne and Board Members, Good Morning and thank you for taking the time to read my testimony in anticipation of your Data Retreat and Community Meeting. This testimony comes from the perspective of a former educator, parent of public school students and taxpayer/resident of the State of Hawaii.

I applaud you for your willingness to publicly share and discuss school performance data and plans to address long-standing inequitable student outcomes as a successful meaningful K12 experience is without controversy necessary for post-secondary success in life. At the same time, I challenge you to go beyond the easy discussion on descriptive and correlation data and move to addressing proposed interventions to ameliorate the well-known, well-researched causes underlying your data. Furthermore, I encourage you not to be content with discussing inputs such as dollars available and programs offered but rather to scrutinize whether the dollars effectively address the known causes for the inequities or if the offered programs actually benefit those performing poorly or merely give further opportunities to those benefiting from their educational opportunities.

The Department, and now Board, has had strategic plans for many years. The plans have always been pretty much the same, irrespective of timing, Board composition, administrations, and superintendents: improving student academic performance, providing students support to achieve, and improving the underlying infrastructure (teachers and facilities). The missing component in all of these plans was, and still seems to be, measuring implementation fidelity and progress.

The Department has long pointed to “pockets of excellence” as a defense to overall disappointing results. Pointing to the high performers as examples only serves those teachers and students in less fortunate circumstances if it serves as a means to identify and replicate effective interventions. Identified best practices and provided opportunities only make a difference if implemented with fidelity. Over the past 3 years in which most indicators did not move in a meaningful positive direction: What, if anything, did schools, complexes or the state office do differently based on the “Check” in “Plan, Do, Check, Act?” The 2017-2020 High Leverage Action Items do not appear to reflect any monitoring of management policies or practices.

I encourage you to fight the urge to increase the number of annual outcomes but rather focus on identifying initial and intermediate outcome measures, which are necessary to achieve

improvement in the annual measures. My annual cholesterol level test will only change to the positive if I change my daily activities and I can predict the positive movement if I monitor my actions on a regular basis. The same is true for your Promise Plan Indicators.

signed  
Robert Campbell

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Dylan Schiff <[dylan\\_schiff@yahoo.com](mailto:dylan_schiff@yahoo.com)>

11/06/2019 12:30 PM

To [testimony.boe@notes.k12.hi.us](mailto:testimony.boe@notes.k12.hi.us)

cc

Subject Testimony

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Aloha Chair Catherine Payne, Vice Chair Brian De Lima, and Members of the Board of Education,

My name is Dylan Schiff and I have been a homeschooler for more than five years. Hawaii and New York are sadly the only states that do not recognize homeschool diplomas. This is unfortunate because the homeschool community has lead to my academic success including early admission into our local community college. Our state is struggling to meet its educational goals with only 43% of students meeting math standards and this year only 54% have reached proficiency in language arts.

I wish to see Hawaii encourage and support homeschool as a valid alternative to a traditional elementary and secondary education. There are many paths to success and support is needed from our community for each individual to choose the path that is right for them.

Mahalo,  
Dylan Schiff  
Homeschooler and Early Admit Student at Leeward Community College

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Dayevin Bunao <dayevin.bunao@gmail.com>

11/06/2019 12:46 PM

To Testimony.boe@notes.k12.hi.us

cc

Subject 2030 Promise Plan Testimony

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November 6, 2019

Hawaii Board of Education  
Catherine Payne, Chairperson  
Brian J. De Lima, Vice Chairperson

Hawaii State Board of Education  
P.O. Box 2360  
Honolulu HI 96804

Aloha Chair Catherine Payne, Vice Chair Brian De Lima, and Members of the Board of Education,

My name is Dayevin Bunao and I am a recent high school graduate and I would like to provide my perspective as a former student and youth advocate. The issue I found to be the most significant was the data released regarding the baseline of academic skills, achievement gap and the high school graduation rates were short of the 2020 Strategic Plan goals.

From the perspective of an economically disadvantaged Native Hawaiian youth, I find myself particularly aligned with the demographics that are contributing to the gaps in the statewide student success indicators and understand the importance to providing aid and assistance to demographics of the like.

In reviewing the 2030 Promise Plan Draft I would like to offer my opinion in finding that the draft was difficult to navigate and comprehend. I would appreciate a clear and organized approach to the outline of information and goals. While viewing the current draft, I am unable to clearly see how each indicator/outcome interact and contribute to the 2030 Promise Plan and what might the information indicate provided the lack of context.

I would like to thank you for giving me the time and place to share my voice and appreciate taking into consideration any suggestions.

Mahalo,

Dayevin K. Bunao

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