

SCR186

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2009

Committee: Senate Education & Housing

Department: Education

Person Testifying: Patricia Hamamoto, Superintendent

Title: S.C.R 186

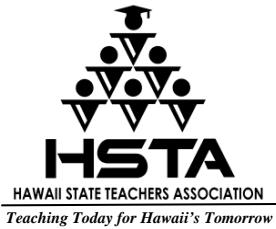
Purpose: Requesting the Department of Education to Facilitate Discussion within the Community on the Funding Inadequacies of Weighted Student Formula.

Department's Position: The Department opposes S.C.R 186. Hawaii Revised Statutes 302a – 1303.5 requires the Committee on Weights (Committee) annually review the Weighted Student Formula (WSF) and make recommended changes to the Hawaii Board of Education. The Committee is composed of principals, teachers, and school community members representing the diversity of school communities within the Department. Each year the Committee has membership from small schools, both rural and urban. In SY07-08 the Committee held meetings in Kauai, Hilo, and Kona to specifically elicit responses from school communities in those areas. The meetings were sparsely attended. The funding available to support the work of the Committee has not been adequate since the beginning. The Department of Education's state offices have been severely reduced in the

budget reductions for Fiscal Biennium 2009 – 2011, to spare the school level budgets as much as possible.

The Legislature has proposed a large number of resolutions which would require the DOE to undertake various studies. The DOE does not have adequate staffing or other resources, such as budgets for mileage or neighbor island travel costs, to complete each of these studies with the care and diligence a meaningful study would require.

The House version of the budget deleted all funding for mileage, per diem, intra-island transportation, and car rentals from the state DOE offices. If this version of the budget prevails, the DOE will not be able to travel to each of the 7 districts to conduct the requested meetings.



1200 Ala Kapuna Street λ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819  
Tel: (808) 833-2711 λ Fax: (808) 839-7106 λ Web: www.hsta.org

**Roger K. Takabayashi**  
President

**Wil Okabe**  
Vice President

**Karolyn Mossman**  
Secretary-Treasurer

**Dwight Takeno**  
Interim Executive Director

**TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION AND HOUSING**

**RE: SCR 186 – REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY ON THE FUNDING INADEQUACIES OF THE WEIGHTED STUDENT FORMULA, PARTICULARLY FOR SMALLER RURAL SCHOOLS, AND EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE MODELS OR FORMULAS TO THE WEIGHTED STUDENT FORMULA IN THE INTEREST OF MAXIMIZING FUNDING EQUITY TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS.**

April 8, 2009

**ROGER TAKABAYASHI, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION**

Chair Sakamoto and Members of the Committee:

HSTA wholeheartedly supports SCR 186. Having been involved with the WSF since its inception, HSTA has consistently pointed out the flaws of the WSF, as it is and as it has been implemented.

1. The original WSF formula was already flawed when it was implemented. In fact, the formula could not be fully implemented because small rural schools in Kohala would have been left without adequate recourses to provide “basic educational” services to their students. Thus, only 10 percent of the formula was implemented in School Year (SY) 2006-07.
2. During the second year the formula was basically unchanged and thus would have again destroyed Kohala schools. A 15 percent implementation was enacted for SY 07-08.
3. The third year (SY 08-09) a “sliding scale” was developed to minimize the damage to small rural schools.
4. Now, in the fourth year (SY 09-10), the sliding scale continues, and the projection is for more of the same.

Prior to the implementation of the WSF, schools were allocated personnel based on the services needed to efficiently operate the schools. Some of the funding was categorical, which meant that it could be only used for specific activities.

This categorical allocation may not have been transparent to outsiders, but it did ensure that schools had librarians, counselors, and an operational teacher-to-student ratio. This funding regime (SY 05-06) also included support service personnel, such as custodians, based on the campus size and number of rooms. It provided a workable way to deliver the needed services, notwithstanding its complexity.

As a member of the Committee on Weight, I noticed people advocating for “their” school. Primarily, the larger schools wanted a more equal dollar to student ratio; thus having a larger student body they would receive a greater share of the pie. Smaller schools lacked the economy of scale to get adequate funding so supplemental funding was proposed on a “Sliding-Scale,” which acted like a base foundation allocation to make up for the shortfalls of the formula.

The WSF was crafted using as models school districts like Edmonton, Canada; San Francisco, California; Houston, Texas; and Seattle, Washington. This model did not transfer effectively to Hawaii schools because the model school districts are all in limited geographical areas, not in an entire state with diverse school sizes and communities. Hawaii is the only school district in the nation that combines inner city schools with rural schools, and schools separated by water, where there is a high cost for participation even within a district as is found in the County of Maui (i.e., Maui, Molokai, Lanai).

When WSF was first implemented it should have been done in such a way that schools were able to do provide no less than the same level of educational services they were providing back in SY 2005-06, the year before WSF took effect. If a perceived inequality among schools exists, the numbers can be tweaked – you do not establish a formula of which only 10 percent can be implemented, knowing that 100 percent implementation would devastate some of the smaller rural schools. This resolution points to a way to develop an equitable remedy for the situation our schools face.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Testimony in Support on SR131/SCR186  
Senate Committee on Education and Housing  
April 8, 2009 at 1:15 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room

Good afternoon Chairman Sakamoto, Vice Chairperson Kidani, and Members of the Education and Housing Committee:

My name is Daisha Acorda and I am an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Paauilo Elementary and Intermediate School on the Big Island. Accompanying me are my fellow classmates Sarah Akiona and Johnathan Ancheta and 9<sup>th</sup> grade student Cheynielle Pacheco. We are part of the Student Leadership Program representing our small rural school located along the Hamakua Coast. We are here today to provide you information about how our program has serviced our community, school and students. In addition we also support ~~SR131~~ and SCR 186, requesting the Department of Education to facilitate discussions with the community on the impacts of the Weighted Student Formula on smaller rural schools, exploring alternative thoughts and possibilities. Specific testimony on this manner will be provided by another group representing our school.

The Student Leadership Program has provided me and my fellow schoolmates with the opportunity to learn leadership skills and implement these skills at our school and community.

Earlier in the school year, over 30 students from various schools along the Hamakua Coast participated in the Student Leadership Camp. At the camp students were taught small and large group facilitation, group decision making techniques, public speaking skills, group problem solving and conflict resolution strategies. Students also learned about judicial, legislative and executive branches of government. At the camp students were also given the opportunity to develop and present testimonials to a mock Senate Committee. Following each presentation, students were given positive and constructive feedback from their peers.

At the school level, the Student Leadership Program at Paauilo School was able to help organize and support the Paauilo School Track Team. The track team consisted of student-athletes kindergarten through the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The track team was able to participate in 3 separate track and field meets. Student participants averaged between 25 to 42 students per meet. Parent support also averaged between 15 to 25 parents per event. Organization of transportation, track t-shirts, lunch and bottled water for the day were organized by the Student Leadership Program and Paauilo School.

At the community level, the Student Leadership Program was also able to assist the County Police Department at their annual DARE activity held at Laupahoehoe point. The DARE activity brings together students from grades 6 through 8 along the Hamakua Coast. These students participate in various team building activities that promote cooperation and unity. Ninth grade Student Leadership Program students at Paauilo School were able to help with the set-up, clean-up and facilitation of the all events.

In closing, the Student Leadership Program provides students from our small rural community many positive opportunities. It has helped us learn and become leaders of our school and community. We humbly ask for your continued support of this program and SR 131 and SCR 186. Thank you for your consideration.

**TESTIMONY in SUPPORT OF SR131/SCR186**

**Senate Committee on Education and Housing  
April 8, 2009 at 1:15 p.m.  
State Capitol, Conference Room \_\_\_\_**

Chairman Sakamoto, Vice Chairperson Kidani, and Members of the Education and Housing Committee:

My name is Alyssa McDaniel and I am a 9<sup>th</sup> grade student at Paauiilo Elementary and Intermediate School, Accompanying me is 9<sup>th</sup> grade students Haley Valencia and Caitlyn Mendes and eight grade students Briana Fiesta and Nathan Tabucbuc. We are part of the Student Leadership Program the represents our small rural school located on the Hamakua Coast. I am here today to testify in support of SR131 and SCR186 requesting the Department of Education to facilitate discussion within the community on the effects of funding inequity of the Weighted Student Formula and its impact on smaller rural schools, and also to explore alternative models or formulas to the Weighted Student Formula in the interest of maximizing funding equity to the public schools.

As you know, Act 51 led to the enactment of the "Reinventing Education Act of 2004" from which the Weighted Student Formula was derived. This formula is used to allocate operating monies to individual public schools that includes a system of weighted characteristics affecting the relative cost of educating each student attending a public school.

Although specific characteristics are taken into consideration, there is still a funding inequity which, in particular, has affected the smaller rural schools. On the Big Island in particular, we have seen the adverse impact of funding inequities with discussion being raised by the DOE about the possible closure of various smaller rural schools and "cutting positions" at these smaller schools

It is our position that if the Weighted Student Formula must be applied, it should be implemented in a broader context, factoring in many other variables to come up with the dollar amount allocated per student. One of these factors is to consider the overall "uniqueness" of many of these smaller rural schools. Many of the smaller rural schools are viewed by the community as being the "hub" of the community, and are utilized by many community organizations for their own meetings and functions during after school hours. These smaller rural schools are often the heart of these smaller communities, and not just a physical structure.

Yet another factor to consider is insuring stability for the students and not having to worry that we will lose valuable teachers. I have great admiration for a number of my teachers and would be very sad and disappointed if a teacher who I look to as a mentor were laid off.

By passing this resolution, we are asking that the DOE initiate community meetings within the seven school districts, focusing specifically on obtaining information from smaller rural schools



within these districts. Meaningful public input can be gained from those who are actually impacted by the allocation of Weighted Student Formula funding.

The ultimate goal of this resolution is to compile a list of factors that should be considered in implementing the Weighted Student Formula in order to insure funding equity and thus enable the smaller rural schools to have more than adequate resources to insure each student is guaranteed the opportunity for an excellent education. This is consistent with the mission of Act 51.

Please support SR131 and SCR186.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Name  
School Name  
School Address