



Hawai'i's Children First
Transforming Public Education

Monday, February 23, 2010
11:30 a.m.
Conference Room 308

LATE TESTIMONY

TESTIMONY TO
THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

RE: HB 2376 – Proposing Amendments To The Hawai'i Constitution Relating To The Board Of Education

Dear Chair Oshiro, Vice-Chair Lee and Members of the Committee:

My name is Randy Baldemor and I write on behalf of Hawai'i's Children First. Hawai'i's Children First is an organization comprised of concerned citizens who support a number of education reforms, including an appointed board of education.

We are strongly supportive of the intent of HB 2376. In view of the current state of our education system and widespread public dissatisfaction, we believe the time is ripe for letting the community decide on how Board of Education members should be selected.

We believe that any discussion about the governance structure of our public education system should begin with a simple question:

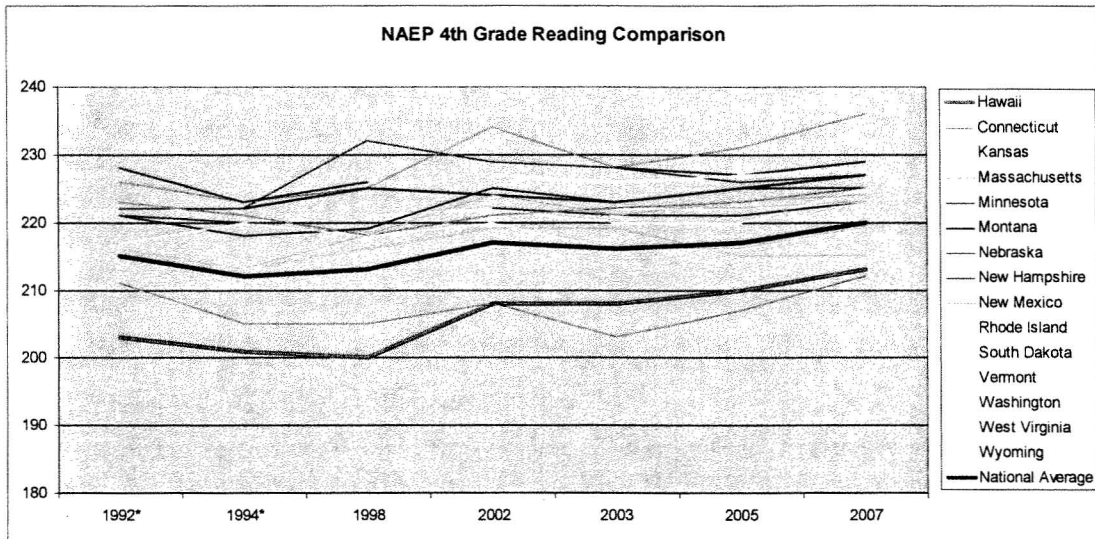
Is Hawai'i's public education system serving our children and our community effectively?

While there are many examples of excellent principals, teachers and students, there is one inescapable conclusion – the system as a whole is letting our children and the community down. Consider the following statistics:

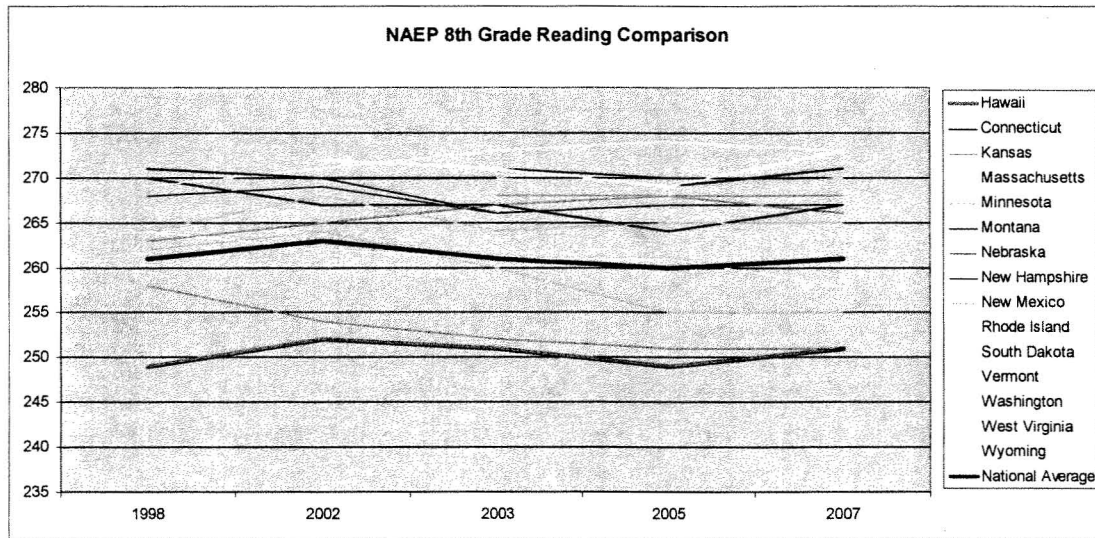
- 74% of our 4th graders and 80% of our 8th graders were below proficient in reading;
- 64% of our 4th graders and 75% of our 8th graders were below proficient in mathematics.

58% of our schools in 2008 did not meet Adequate Yearly Progress.

2007 – 4th Grade Reading Ranking = 44th



2007 – 8th Grade Reading Ranking = 47th



According to the U.S. Census Bureau, we rank 13th in the United States in terms of public education spending. We spend somewhere in the range of 40% to 50% or more of our general excise tax revenue on public education. Despite funding levels that appear to be very competitive with other states, we have one of the lowest amounts of instructional time in the year, made even worse by the school furloughs.

Thus, we strongly urge the Committee to pass HB 2376 to restore accountability and efficiency in public education and to support a more prosperous education system that places Hawai'i's children first.



**HAWAII STATE
STUDENT COUNCIL**

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February 23, 2010

The Honorable Marcus Oshiro, Chair
Committee on Finance
Senate of Hawaii
415 South Beretania Street

LATE

HB 2376 + 2377

To Chair Oshiro and Esteemed members of Finance Committee:

Aloha, I am Kelly Maeshiro, current student member of the state Board of Education (BOE). I understand that today you will be voting on bills that would create an appointed Board of Education. With that, I'd like to ask that the language for the Board of Education student member be incorporated into the bill as it was when it was passed by the Education Committee.

If over twenty years of accumulated support from students, the Department, the Board, and even legislators doesn't speak for itself, let it suffice to say that voting rights for the Board student member is of immeasurable meaning to the students. I am sure you've have, over the years, heard every argument for and against voting rights, but it will always wind down to this: sure, our students don't know *more* than adult Board members, but they certainly know *different*. The Board student member supplements the Board's aerial perspective of the system with a worm's eye view. I hope and I trust you will make the right decision and honor what our *keiki* really have to offer.

Very truly yours,

Kelly Maeshiro, Student Member 2009-2010
Board of Education