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Executive Director

April 3, 2023

Committee on Education
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Kidani, Vice Chair Kim, and Members of the Committee,

HawaiiKidsCAN strongly supports SR150/SCR210, which requests the Board of Education to report on ways to increase access to extended learning opportunities or course credits for non-traditional and external learning experiences.

Founded in 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN is a local nonprofit organization committed to ensuring that Hawaii has an excellent and equitable education system that reflects the true voices of our communities and, in turn, has a transformational impact on our children and our state. We strongly believe that all students should have access to excellent educational opportunities, regardless of family income levels and circumstances.

We believe SR150/SCR210 represents an exciting opportunity to move innovative, non-traditional learning programs forward in Hawaii. Here is our broader rationale for the Board of Education.

What exists in Hawaii

Alternative Learning Programs, Supports and Services are offered in Hawaii through the Hawaii Department of Education Office of Student Support Services. This specific branch specializes in supporting and assisting students that are at-promise. Students that are at-promise can be defined as those students who are not on track to graduate and may potentially drop out of school for various reasons. The Alternative Learning Program ensures services are in place to support students in achieving high academic standards so that they can successfully graduate. All in all, this branch targets students who have difficulty in having success in a traditional learning environment and the services provided to students are individualized and appropriate supports to ensure students succeed.

The Alternative Learning Program in Hawaii aims at empowering students by providing them with learning styles that best meet their needs. Project based learning, ‘āina-based instruction, and Place based instruction are a few learning styles that teachers are utilizing so that students can make meaning of the work they are completing. For example, educators on the west side of Oahu are utilizing ‘āina-based instruction by partnering with Kahala Farms so students can interact with the gardens to understand plants, animals, and nature. The students in these programs earn credits for science, math, English and social studies by attending these farm days for the entire school day. Another example of the learning styles being provided is Place based instruction and Farrington High School utilizes Place based instruction by allowing students who become short on credits to enroll in Kina‘ole. In this program students will need to do a combination of online programs and community service. As students go into the community to complete their hours of community service they are placed in locations that are familiar to them and these businesses will potentially give them a job so that students can earn a workforce development diploma. A few examples of the places students are placed at is Goodwill, McDonalds, and the grocery store and some students choose to work on a GED after they complete their workforce development diploma. The Alternative Learning Program at various locations differ in how they structure their program but educators do try and ensure students have access to project based lessons so that the students can earn credit for core classes and typically schools do try and partner with outside agencies so that students can get real world work experience and earn credit. The Alternative Learning Program is committed to ensuring students are placed in small class sizes to allow for a small teacher to student ratio. Though each ALP is different at all schools they do have components they must align to. According to the alpss.org, “ALPSS has five essential components that all programs align to” and they can be found below:

1. Assist students in improving their academic competencies and enable at- promise students to meet the requirements of the Hawaii Department of Education adopted state standards and meet state established graduation requirements. Within the ALPSS setting, innovative instructional strategies are applied to re-engage and engage students in learning (for example: Project Based Learning, experiential learning, etc.).
2. Assist students in developing appropriate behaviors and social/emotional competencies and support student social-emotional learning.
3. To provide transitional support services to at-promise students as they move from school to alternative programs, re-enter school successfully, graduate from high school college, career and citizenship ready and prepare for positive post-secondary outcomes (college, career, trade training/school, military, etc.).

4. Within the ALPSS setting, parent engagement is an essential part of the program and is consistent and on-going with the goal of partnering with the parent/family as a member of the ALPSS team supporting at-promise students.
5. ALPSS establish community partners and engage community agencies to support at-promise students.

The Alternative Learning Programs, Supports and Services of the Hawaii Department of Education has a goal to ensure every student in the program has a shot of success. The program believes that they are providing support so that every student has the potential to achieve their goals. They have almost laid a foundation in every school where students can stand on their own and chart their own course to graduation.

Models from elsewhere

New Hampshire Department of Education: The Learn Everywhere Program

- Allows all students to earn credit through hands-on, real-world experiences that consist of work based learning and community service engagements
- Independent study, Private instruction, Performing groups, Internships, Community service, Apprenticeships, and Online courses are ways that students can earn credit and apply it to graduation

The School District of Palm Beach County: Alternative Education

- Their goal is to improve students' academic and social skills, improve graduation rates, and transition students to the most appropriate school setting.
- Partners with the juvenile justice system to ensure students understand they can have access to education so that they can earn a diploma or GED.

Redwood Area School District: Alternative Learning Program

- Students earn credit through the ALP by completing a summer school program, attending classes during the school day, attending classes after school, completing on-line courses and even through working at their jobs!
- Teen parents can also earn credit by working with the Early Childhood Family Education program offered through the school district.

How to expand/mainstream

The Alternative Learning Program in Hawaii really helps to ensure teachers are prepared to teach at-promise students by giving them a coach to help them improve teaching practices. Teachers are provided with tools on how to best instruct students and the teachers also have access to funding so that the teachers can do amazing things with students in class and outdoors. The students in ALPSS are given an iPad which

helps them have an interactive learning experience. The ALPSS website does not state how students request and receive the iPad but the ALPSS has made it an initiative to provide students with tools such as an iPad that will help the students to study at home.

There is no curriculum or scope and sequence that teachers must use, because the students guide their own learning and students have ownership over their learning which motivates them to continue learning. Through multiple interviews, it has been noted that teachers are difficult to find because teachers have to be committed to doing the work and working with at-risk students. The teachers in the ALPSS are required to utilize rigor because the program has an understanding and a belief the students can achieve and succeed. The students in the program are not the students with special needs as there are other programs in place for those students to access the curriculum. The ALPSS works with community partners to ensure students have real world experiences. Students receive job training and students work with industry leaders to work in partnership to achieve a goal. The ALPSS is looking to expand industry connections to all schools because unfortunately all schools are not as far along with having solid ALPSS in schools.

Board of Education policy and recommended changes

Recommended change: Add the following underlined language into POLICY 105-10 of BOE policy.

POLICY 105-10

ALTERNATIVE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

In order to ensure that all students achieve high academic standards and graduate, all Department secondary schools shall provide appropriate services and support to students who have difficulty succeeding in traditional learning environments. These services and supports may be offered through such structures as the Alternative Learning Centers (“ALC”), Special Motivation Programs (“SMP”), smaller academic houses, tutorial services, work-based learning experiences, and other models that meet the needs of the target population.

The goals of these programs are: 1) early identification of students who need timely and appropriate intervention strategies, services, and supports; 2) creation of effective and supportive learning environments that enable participating students to improve their academic performance to attain applicable performance standards and graduate from high school; and 3) provision of services and supports that help students develop appropriate social, emotional, and behavior competencies.

Given that such non-traditional programs are likely to provide benefits to a wide range of students, the Department shall ensure that all students have the opportunity to enroll in these programs on a supplemental basis. The Department shall also strive to harness all available community resources, including but not limited to organizations, businesses, talented individuals, natural resources, and technology, to engage each student in achieving necessary skills and knowledge

Rationale: There are secondary students who have difficulty succeeding in traditional learning environments. These students may have academic, social, emotional, or behavioral difficulties that impact their academic performance and success. Alternative environments provide services and supports that meet their needs. Such programs also likely provide clear benefits to the general student population, thus should be accessible on a supplemental basis.

[Approved: 05/03/2016 (as Board Policy 105.10); amended: 06/21/2016 (renumbered as Board Policy 105-10)]

Former policy 2131 history: approved: 11/03/2005

Mahalo for your consideration,

David Miyashiro
Founding Executive Director
HawaiiKidsCAN

SCR-210

Submitted on: 4/1/2023 7:02:01 AM

Testimony for EDU on 4/3/2023 3:30:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Phaedra Elisabeth Robinson	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha and thank you for the opp to provide testimony in support of this bill.

- As a teacher I know that for many students, learning outside of the traditional classroom presents new opportunities for excitement and engagement. The pandemic has left so many of our students behind, disconnected and discouraged by the public school system and it's lack of support for them. By harnessing community as the classroom, students have a wealth of resources to draw upon for transformational growth. Hawaii's close-knit communities only make this more of a possibility, whether it's a traditional Hawaiian fish pond or innovative employer.
- ALPSS program are intended to reach "at-promise" students for whom the traditional model of education has not worked. However, many other students likely struggle with the traditional model of teaching and learning, yet they will never experience an alternative program. Just because a student is not close to dropping out does not mean that they are thriving. I support this bill as passing SCR210 would ensure that the Hawaii State Board of Education (BOE) examines current policy to enable more students to participate in nontraditional learning and for more community partners to get involved.

Thank you,

Phaedra Robinson, Ph.D.
Founder & CEO RAI Hawaii