

ACT 299

H.B. NO. 3934

A Bill for an Act Relating to Education.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The purpose of this Act is to allow the department of education to establish a two-year pilot Hawaii young scholars program. The legislature finds that certain ethnic groups occupy a disadvantaged position in our State, particularly because of their socio-economic and education status. The legislature also finds that one way to lessen this disadvantage is to provide a stimulating, positive, and quality educational environment.

The Hawaii young scholars program would serve to lessen the disparity among those individuals who pursue a higher education and those who do not go on to college. This disparity is a community concern, especially as a significant number of economically disadvantaged children tend to become school drop-outs. Education is a positive alternative for these children to avoid a life of need, poverty, welfare, and abuse.

In 1990, the legislature passed Act 333, which established the Hawaii opportunity program in education (HOPE). Through the HOPE special fund, financially needy students are given the chance to participate in a comprehensive program at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels with priority given to students from ethnic groups who are underrepresented in the student population at the University of Hawaii.

However, HOPE is limited to those students attending "special needs schools". A separate but complementary program may be initiated and implemented to reach students who might not otherwise be eligible participants in HOPE, but could benefit from a program that affords quality preparation for post-secondary education. A program that is designed to stimulate, motivate, and support children from ethnic groups underrepresented at the University of Hawaii would assist in continuing efforts to equalize educational opportunities for all ethnic groups within the State and would help to alleviate the racial tension that sometimes exists because of lack of educational opportunities for some groups.

This program should provide early, continuous, and quality educational enrichment activities that include parents, teachers, students, and student peers as core support members in each student's educational progress. This support network would in all probability have substantial influence on whether a student will acquire the motivation, interest, and determination to pursue a higher education.

The teacher, the parent, the sibling, the friend, and the employer—all facets of society—are critical to learning. Also important are parental support and attitudes toward learning and education, as parental attitudes are often reflected in their child's attitude, ability, and determination to learn and succeed in school. Teachers generally find that if students are motivated to learn, then their role as facilitators of learning is greatly enhanced.

SECTION 2. The department of education may establish a two-year pilot program to be called the Hawaii young scholars program. The department of education may implement the program in five selected elementary schools throughout the State, beginning with the third grade in the first year of the two-year pilot program, and then the fourth grade in the second year of the two-year pilot program. Schools not selected may be encouraged to participate in the Hawaii young scholars program under school/community-based management.

The department of education may coordinate with the University of Hawaii in the design of the Hawaii young scholars program.

The department of education may also provide a contract of agreement to each economically disadvantaged child and the child's parents or guardians that is consistent with school/community-based management.

SECTION 3. If established by the department of education, the Hawaii young scholars program pilot program shall operate for two years. The department of education shall submit a report on the performance of the Hawaii young scholars program and its recommendations with regard to the program to the legislature twenty days prior to the convening of the regular session of 1994.

SECTION 4. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved June 29, 1992.)