

2022 HawaiiKidsCAN Action Fund Candidate Survey

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1. What does Hawaii do well with regards to K-12 public education?

Hawaii is in a unique position of having greater numbers of students identified as economically disadvantaged, special education, Section 504, or English Learners. This means that our teachers and educational systems are experienced in dealing with these student populations from diverse backgrounds and situations. Hawaii's Department Of Education also encourages our teachers to pursue advanced degrees to better equip them with teaching methodologies and knowledge required to address our students unique needs. Within the past year we have seen a higher percentage of fully licensed teachers which demonstrates that we have the resources available for our educators to seek licenses. Another notable uptrend is the on-time graduation rates that have steadily increased over the past five years. This shows that Hawaii schools' graduation attrition rates are on the rise and a base level of education is being provided to our youth as they matriculate from the public school system. A similar trend with dual credit attainment amongst high school students has shown that there is still a desire to exceed beyond their public school education. Our Career Technical Education programs also continue to remain a reliable alternative for students that seek non-traditional post-secondary options. Overall the public education system in Hawaii has its strengths and weaknesses.

2. What should Hawaii do better with regards to K-12 public education?

One of the most pressing issues that affect all schools in Hawaii is the maintenance and facilities backlog that needs to be addressed. I am open to exploring and finding dedicated funding sources for our public school system to get the improvements and repairs that are needed. Some schools have gone without girls locker rooms, and others are in dire need of electrical upgrades in order to use a/c units that have been promised to them. I support improving efforts to remove barriers for students to enter college and post-secondary educational institutions. I think we could do a lot more to provide access and guidance to grant funding for qualified students and their families to prepare, apply, and enroll in college, vocational, or apprenticeship programs. I also support increased access to technology, language access resources, and dual credit opportunities. One of the biggest areas for improvement is to help lay down the infrastructure for high-speed broadband in rural areas like Moloka'i, Lana'i, and Hāna. The lack of access was compounded in 2020 by the Coronavirus pandemic and all of our public school students were required to attend classes via the internet. Increasing access to broadband and internet for virtual educational purposes will be a vital part of educating rural communities.

3. How should Hawaii prioritize our spending on K-12 public education (for example: teacher salaries, programs to address learning loss, technology, community partnerships and projects, computer science education, charter schools, distance learning options, etc.)?

2022 HawaiiKidsCAN Action Fund Candidate Survey

First and foremost, I support prioritizing an increase to teacher's pay in order to maintain our current educational workforce and potentially attract more teachers. Next we should focus on developing distance learning options with technology and community based learning programs. There is more that can be done to ensure that we reach out into rural communities and close the technology gap that is growing in our society. We need to teach parents as well as students on how to use technology effectively. If we don't provide support within the homes of our students then we are letting them fall off once they leave our campuses and when they leave their virtual classrooms. As we've seen during this pandemic, parents have had to home-school their children and some of them are realizing that they are not equipped to provide technical assistance for their children when they are faced with technological challenges. We need to provide the Parent Teacher Associations with resources so they can be a safety net for parents to fall back on. This would create a stronger connection between parents and their children's education by having them be more involved. When parents get involved, students succeed. In order to accomplish this, there needs to be increasing spending levels in all aspects of public education.

4. Hawaii should require all students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid before graduating from high school, or complete a waiver.

Yes

4.a Comment

Additionally, it should be the policy of the DOE to also include programs that provide comprehensive alternatives to traditional higher education such as vocational/trade schools, apprenticeships programs, and on the job training.

5. The Hawaii State Constitution provides for the "establishment, support and control of a statewide system of public schools," but does not guarantee quality education. Should the State Constitution be amended to provide quality education as a fundamental right? Should Hawaii students have a constitutional right to a quality education? Please explain your answer.

Yes, quality education should be a fundamental human right supported by proper funding levels within the State's Constitution. Every kid deserves a chance to have a quality education if we want a quality future.

6. What will you do to improve the relationship between the Hawaii State Board of Education and legislature?

As a legislator, I will work closely with all affected stakeholders to establish and maintain open dialogue by meeting with those that are affected by a proposed bill. I would also support increased student and teacher participation at the policy making level of not just the Board of Education, but at the legislature. I would make it a point to meet with students and teachers regularly to help inform my decision making and policy creation.

7. What leadership actions will you take for the Hawaii Department of Education, University of Hawaii system, and employers to work more effectively together?

2022 HawaiiKidsCAN Action Fund Candidate Survey

I believe that a more open approach should be pursued cohesively with all parties involved to forge a path to improve our public education system. While I realize that policy-making is often complex and requires delicate diplomacy, I would be a legislator that would have an open door policy to hear all sides of the policy debate. I would seek to be directly involved with inter-agency planning involving our schools which would help to establish channels of communication and encourage a multilateral approach to issues.

8. College going remains flat, with roughly 50% of recent Hawaii public high school graduates going on to college (2 or 4 year). How do you propose to raise these levels so Hawaii is more competitive with states like California, which has a nearly 65% rate?

I am an advocate for strengthening academic pipelines that work on expanding existing pipelines into specialty academies especially in the areas of STEM. Additionally I would seek to build upon existing grants for qualifying programs to help disenfranchised students overcome socio-economic barriers. I also support more funding for college & career readiness programs and positions to help improve our college attrition rates. College enrollment has dropped during the pandemic because students don't feel like paying the in-person fees that go to facilities that they are not able to use. With the shift of education to distance learning, students can learn from home without going into physical classrooms. We can increase college enrollment rates by redirecting outreach efforts to online education and learning. We must focus on digital education, reducing the technological divide, and equipping students with internet enabled devices to access their classrooms and learning opportunities.

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