

2022 HawaiiKidsCAN Action Fund Candidate Survey

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1. What does Hawaii do well with regards to K-12 public education?
In order to answer this question accurately, we first and foremost need to complete an independent fiscal and management audit of the Department of Education. This would provide an objective and transparent review and analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, and improvements that are needed with the administration and fiscal management of the Department of Education.
2. What should Hawaii do better with regards to K-12 public education?
A statewide audit would help to accurately and thoroughly answer this question. However, one trend I find particularly concerning comes from a 2021 report that Hawai'i ranks 13th in school spending, but our school system ranks 40th, giving us the designation of 'High Spending, Weak School System.' Only 7 other states received this designation. Our keiki deserve better. To help improve our public school system I believe we should consider the merits of reorganizing our statewide school district, and a shift towards competency-based education.
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.)?
I believe our education dollars should be prioritized on items that are student-oriented. Ideally, I would like to see a greater emphasis on education choice, including the expansion and equitable funding of public charter schools. That is not to say that I am opposed to any measure that does not directly impact students. Students will not be able to receive a quality education if we are not attracting, employing, and retaining quality educators. As such, measures to improve the teacher pipeline should also be considered. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that Hawai'i's high cost of living makes it difficult to recruit and retain educators.
4. Hawaii should require all students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid before graduating from high school, or complete a waiver.
Yes

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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.

Students should have a constitutional right to a quality education. However, they should also have the opportunity to attain that education in whatever environment best meets their needs, whether that be from a traditional public school, public charter school, private school, homeschool, or some other form of personalized education. I would love to see every student have the ability to access all educational options, instead of just the chosen few.

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

I am not aware of a relational problem between the Board of Education and the Legislature. Although the Governor appoints the members of the Board of Education (BOE), the BOE is an independent board, separate and apart from the executive branch. Accordingly, as the appointing authority, the governor must exercise due diligence in evaluating the character and competence of each nominee to insure that if any relational strain or problem with any other branch of government, agency, and/or department develops, the board’s members, through the guidance and direction of the chair (which is appointed by the governor) can address and thus solve it quickly.

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

This is vitally important and is often a missing piece in education. Most people realize that the end goal of the education system is to ensure that each high school and college student is well equipped for the job market after they graduate. However, under the current system, there is a disconnect between those providing the skills and education to future employees, and the actual employers. In order to ensure that a student’s schooling is adequately preparing them to be productive employees, we need to ensure that those drafting and amending curriculum are speaking directly with employers to find out what skills are most valuable to them. One way to ensure that necessary skills are being passed along to students is to require the Board of Education to include business representation, or to require the Board of Education and the University of Hawai’i to solicit input from the business community prior to making major curriculum changes. These proposals will ensure we are equipping our keiki with the skills needed for future employment.

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?

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The objective of education should not be what percentage of students attend a 2- or 4-year college, but rather ensuring that all of our students have been adequately prepared and are ready to pursue a career path of their choice and interest. One area that Hawai'i should do better is promoting the different options for post-secondary education that do not include a 4-year degree. For too long society has perpetuated the idea that a college education is the only way for a student to become a successful member of society. However, in reality, a four-year college degree is far from the only path to success. Many of the trades provide high-school graduates with the opportunity to meet, and in some cases exceed, the earning potential of their college-attending counterparts. These options need to be better communicated to students so that they realize that committing the time and finances to a 4-year degree is not the only path to success. Along these same lines, Hawai'i should introduce career and technical education (CTE) options earlier in our students' education. Not only will this help to engage students in areas they may have an interest in earlier, it will also help to promote CTE options as viable career paths earlier in life, so they don't view it as a backup plan if a 4-year degree is not the right fit.



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