

2022 HawaiiKidsCAN Action Fund Candidate Survey

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

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The Hawaii Department of Education has embraced the Native Hawaiian culture and values, and works hard to be true to our place. Because Hawaii is one state and district public K-12 system, we have the greatest level of equity in funding for all schools. School funding that is not dependent on property taxes (and therefore the value of homes in that district), and weights the additional needs of groups of students, allows for more supports as needed.

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

Listen to the teachers and work more closely with parents before initiating new projects and initiatives. Ensure that every school facility's repair and maintenance budget is supported. Education leaders should be flexible in their strategies that are state-wide (because of equity, economies of scale, etc) versus local needs. That is, some things make sense to do state-wide, but some things are unique to the neighbor islands.

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.)?

Our focus and priority should be on what students' needs are, now and also long term. Learning loss is a big issue, and additional support for teachers and students should be a priority so they can make progress. That said, DOE alone will not be successful. They will need to work with community and business partners, with charter schools, with parents and legislators, and with other branches of state, county and federal government. That will take teamwork and a strategic focus.

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

No

4.a Comment

I would like to discuss with the Superintendent as mandates and requirements have implementation challenges that, if imposed without real engagement with those impacted, can have negative consequences for other priorities. That said, more support for students and families to complete the FAFSA and encouragement / information so that they know its importance in opening up opportunities through financial supports, would have my support. This would include ensuring students know also about other ways they can fund their post-secondary education. For example, my husband and I provide scholarships for high school seniors. I also know that many students may not want to pursue a college degree, but studies show post secondary training, like apprenticeships, can provide opportunities for students to get good jobs that provide them the chance to work and stay in Hawaii, and raise their families here.

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.

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First, I believe that there is a variety of opinions defining what is a “quality education”. I would be careful of a Constitutional amendment that might impinge on a family’s desires and values. That said, accountability for how students are doing is something that I do support. As a business leader, I know that I am accountable for my business - my employees, my customers, my community. Schools need to be accountable as well.

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

The BOE is charged with formulating statewide educational policy. To that end, I would seek board members who understand their role in supporting the Department on a policy level in a variety of forums: at the Legislature, in the community and to our business community.

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

As Governor, I would support the BOE and UH Board of Regents to insure that they are in alignment with and supportive of the Superintendent and the University President in their efforts to align workforce development training programs with employers. This will require collaboration, partnership and leadership. Hawaii P20 Partnerships for Education is one of the strongest in the nation because of the collaboration between early education, K-12 and UH systems. I would strongly support their efforts.

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 would support the DOE in its early college efforts because we must make sure that we engage students in thinking about their future. What do they want to be? What do they need in order to work and live in Hawaii? From there, we must lay a path to show how higher education, or post-secondary education (including job training, apprenticeships and the like) is relevant and necessary to that future. We should also support our community colleges and technical schools more. We need to consider that a segment of our graduates are looking at careers that pay well but may be outside the conventional path. We need to also take into account the impact that the pandemic has had. Students have been isolated, they have lost the activities and the support that once engaged them in this kind of reflection. We need to reach out to them and offer them a way forward. Hope - with action.