

Summary of Selected School Reform Initiatives

1. Legislative Auditor 1973 Report

In 1973 the Hawai'i State Legislative Auditor published a Management Audit of the Department of Education. At that time the DOE sought community input through District School Advisory Councils. The Auditor found that advisory councils were not an effective means of decentralizing authority since "advice" could be ignored by the central authorities. The Auditor recommended that the DOE and Board of Education address concerns about the ability of communities to have input into the public education system and examine the issue of decentralizing public education.

1973 Legislative Auditor Report

"The bulk of the work of [District School Advisory] Councils...is simply transmitting information and concerns, local in nature, to the board of education and district superintendents. ... The mere transmission of information and concerns does little to improve the education system."

2. Gov. Burn's 1974 Ad Hoc Commission on Operations, Revenues and Expenditures: The CORE Report

After in-depth study, the Commission arrived at the conclusion that improvement in the quality of education required systemic changes among the DOE, Legislature and Governor; between the DOE and schools; and between the DOE and the public. The report recommended that each school complex act as the administrative unit responsible for budgeting, hiring, allocating resources and conducting assessments. Further, the Commission recommended that each complex administrative unit be advised by an elected parent council that viewed the complexes as semi-autonomous administrative units, with a greatly revised role for the central DOE.

3. 1988 Berman Report

In 1988 the Berman Report found that centralization of education historically had served some good purposes, but that education had changed and that Hawai'i needed to remove organizational barriers which reduced the quality of education. The three major organizational weaknesses identified were: Public education lacked a clear mission, in part because of the ambiguous authority between the Board, the DOE, the Legislature and the Governor; The centralization within the DOE led to lack of clear responsibility and accountability and made it difficult to exercise leadership at the school level; and Parents and community members found it difficult to influence their schools and the education system, creating a lack of involvement, identification and trust.

1988 Berman Report

- Elected Community School Boards at each Complex
- School Boards hire principals, faculty and staff
- Phase out transfer rights for principals over 4-years
- State Board and DOE focus on equitable funding, standards, goals, evaluation & personnel

4. 1991 Berman Report

In 1991 the Business Roundtable brought Berman back to Hawai'i to analyze the steps taken to restructure the education system. While Berman praised the fledgling steps taken to implement School Community Based Management (SCBM), the 1991 Report pointed out that "SCBM alone will not change the broader governance structure of Hawai'i public education."

The 1991 Report recommended the following: The BOE focus on broad educational goals (standards); The DOE ensure equity, accountability and adequate advance planning; The existing 7 districts provide technical assistance to schools; and, New Community School Boards be established at each complex, and be given authority and control over complex development plans, school budgets and the hiring of principals and teachers.

5. 1992 Task Force on Educational Governance

Like every previous report, this Task Force identified the organizational structure of the education system as the primary barrier to improving what goes on in the classroom and ultimate student achievement. Specifically, the Task Force found the conflicting authorities between the DOE, Legislature and Governor, as well as the highly centralized authority within the DOE to be the main problems.

Overlapping responsibilities at the state level between the BOE, DOE, Legislature and Governor and overlapping responsibilities between the DOE and other administrative agencies created confusion, delays and lack of accountability at the state level. The DOE's own highly centralized system was found to control too many decisions at the central level and spread responsibility for program implementation between too many levels to be effective. Approximately 92% of the people surveyed by the Task Force wanted to replace the existing Board of Education.

Like the Berman Report, the Task Force did not view SCBM as an alternative to decentralizing the administrative authorities and governance of the DOE. SCBM is a school-level advisory group, and the Task Force specified that the governance and entire administration of the public school system needed to be addressed. The Task Force endorsed adopting local school boards defined by county lines. However, given that the public had varying views regarding the number of school boards, the Task Force recommended that the public be given the right to choose the type of governance structure they preferred.

The 1992 Task Force recommended giving voters the choice between the following three structures for public education: Elected local boards of education along county boundaries; Appointed state board of education; or Elected state board of education.

1992 Task Force on Educational Governance

"After nearly seven months of intensive study and deliberation, the Task Force concluded that the State's existing highly centralized system has distanced Hawai'i's people from their schools and has become unable to respond appropriately to the State's continually changing and developing educational needs ... The Legislature should pass a referendum to give voters a choice of three alternative structures for the board(s) of education."

6. 1997 Economic Recovery Task Force

The 1997 Economic Recovery Task Force was convened to address the serious stagnation in Hawai'i's economy. The Task Force identified the four major issues that affect our state economy, and the steps Hawai'i must take in order to revitalize its economy. Number four was the quality of public education, and the recommendation was to make structural changes to improve the education system.

The Task Force believed "that it is critical to adopt county-based school boards. School management must be closer to the community that it serves."

The group recommended replacing the statewide school board with four County school boards appointed by the Governor, each with its own superintendent with a statewide superintendent serving as coordinator. Academic standards would be set by the state, and individual schools given greater autonomy over their budgets.

1997 Economic Recovery Task Force

- Adopt county-based school boards and move school management closer to the community it serves
- Individual schools given more autonomy and budgetary control
- Maintain state standards

7. 2004 Lingle Report (Citizens Achieving Reform in Education):

The co-called CARE group recommended that the roles of the governor, legislature and school board be clarified so that the public would know who to hold accountable to public education; that significantly more resources and great autonomy be shifted to the individual schools; that funds be allocated using a weighted student formula (WSF); that the statewide DOE function only as a State Education Agency (SEA); and that seven new school boards be elected, funded using WSF and given operational responsibility for the schools in their respective districts as the Local Education Agencies (LEAs); and that principals be recruited, trained and encouraged to provide leadership rather than mere compliance on behalf of their school communities.

Lingle CARE Report

- Seven elected school boards to function as LEAs
- State board focus on standards, policy and equitable funding
- More resources and decision-making power to the schools
- Funding by Weighted Student Formula (WSF)
- Principals to function as leaders