Background: Act 51

The Reinventing Education Act of 2004 was designed to be a road map to improve public education in Hawaii through a coordinated package of initiatives.

✔ Establishing a weighted student formula;

✔ Providing additional information technology;

✔ Empowering principals through a Hawaii principals academy and other means;

✔ Strengthening community involvement through school community councils and parent-community networking centers;

✔ Providing more mathematics textbooks;

✔ Lowering class size in kindergarten, grade one, and grade two;

✔ Providing full-time, year-round, high school student activity coordinators;

✔ Providing support for students who need additional help to succeed in school;

✔ Establishing a national board certification incentive program for teachers;

✔ Enhancing teacher education;

✔ Reducing the bureaucracy that hampers the effectiveness of the department of education;

✔ Improving the educational accountability system;

✔ Requiring board of education members to hold community meetings in their districts; and

✔ Establishing a single school calendar.

'Funding equity' in schools

State governments across the U.S. wrestle with how to fund the public schools that fall under their purview. Many do so through property taxes, which can result in resources being apportioned unevenly across districts. The U.S. Department of Education works toward equity funding through Title I grants, which target resources to districts and schools with higher concentrations of poverty.

Via Act 51, Hawaii uses a **Weighted Student Formula (WSF)** to allocate funds to schools on a per-pupil basis. WDF is equitable, predictable, and transparent. How it works:

1. A specific dollar amount is allocated to educate each student enrolled.

2. Additional money is given to educate students with identified characteristics that impact their learning and achievement. (See "WSF Weights," below.)

The reasoning behind a weighted student formula funding model is three-fold:

1. The relative cost of educating students can be much more accurately assessed, based upon the unique learning needs of each student.

2. Funds follow students to whichever school they attend.

3. The budget process becomes more transparent as it is based on dollars, not staff positions.

THE BUDGET

EDN 100 reflects school-level funding. Nearly all EDN 100 funds are allocated under WSF, and comprise about 54 percent of state funding for the Hawaii DOE. Learn more: *bit.ly/DOEbudget*

WSF weights

The funding calculation for weights is set by the Board of Education based on the recommendation of the Committee on Weights:

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

• K-2 Students

• English Language Learner

  • Fully English Proficient
  • Limited English Proficiency
  • Non-English Proficient

• Economically Disadvantaged

• Transiency

• Gifted and Talented

• Grade Levels

SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

• Multi-track

• Neighbor Island

NON-WEIGHTED LUMP-SUM

• School type (elementary, middle, high, combination)

FINANCIAL PLANS: Based on dollars available under the WSF, each school principal working in tandem with the School Community Council produces an annual Financial Plan to fund the school's Academic Plan and basic operations.

ENROLLMENT ADJUSTMENTS: Updated enrollment counts are used to adjust allocations three times throughout the year: Shortly after school starts when the Official Enrollment Count is taken, again at the end of the first quarter and at the beginning of the second semester.

COMMITTEE ON WEIGHTS (COW)

This group of educators and community members meets during the spring and summer of odd numbered years to develop recommended revisions to fine-tune the WSF, which are delivered to the Board of Education. The primary functions of the COW are to determine:

• which operating funds should be placed in a single allocation based on student characteristics,

• the student characteristics used to in allocate funds to schools,

• the amount of "weight" (or amount of the characteristic on the cost of education) for each characteristic, and

• specific units for each characteristic.