

OVERVIEW

THE AUDITOR
STATE OF HAWAII

A Study of Curriculum, Budgeting, and Repair and Maintenance for Hawaii's Public Schools

Summary

In response to the Legislature's request, we studied three areas in education: add-on programs that compete with the core curriculum for instructional time; Chapter 37, HRS, on budgeting; and Chapter 26, HRS, as it applies to repair and maintenance (R&M) of school buildings.

We found that Board of Education policies and Department of Education (DOE) documents do not clearly define the statewide curriculum and the core program. Most educators we surveyed agreed that the core program consisted of four basic subjects: language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. But some also considered other subjects such as health, physical education, and fine arts to be part of the core.

More important, neither core nor add-on programs, however defined, have been evaluated for meeting any statewide standard of student learning. The department has not managed the statewide curriculum in terms of what is written, taught, and tested. The DOE's written curriculum materials are not current and sufficiently useful. The department does not train teachers to ensure that teaching is effective, relevant, challenging, and tied to state curriculum materials. Finally, the department does not have a testing program to ensure that curriculum materials and training are producing the intended student learning.

We found that state laws on budgeting do not constrain educational restructuring to promote decision making at the school level. It would be helpful, however, for the schools to be able to carry over school-level funds at the end of each fiscal year. We agree with the philosophy behind the department's proposal for a lumpsum budget, but we believe that the proposal is not ready for department-wide implementation. As currently proposed, it would give very little added flexibility to schools. A pilot project using the proposed budget on school/community-based managed (SCBM) schools would be advisable.

With respect to repair and maintenance, we found to be outdated the memorandum of agreement setting forth the service agreement between the DOE and the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS). We also found that Oahu schools are underserved

for minor repairs in comparison with schools on the Neighbor Islands. The most significant problem is major repairs because funding has not kept up with the backlog and the growing number of needed repairs. We believe that the R&M program can be improved by realigning responsibilities within DOE and DAGS and improving training.

Recommendations and Response

We recommend that the Board of Education develop new policies to clarify the statewide core curriculum and the appropriate roles and responsibilities of state, district, and school personnel. The DOE should better manage the curriculum by improving and aligning its written, taught, and tested curriculum. We recommend that the board develop new policies that clearly fix responsibilities for curriculum management and monitor the department's implementation of these responsibilities.

We recommend that the Legislature consider allowing schools to carry over any unexpended school-level funds at the end of each fiscal year. We also recommend that the Legislature not appropriate according to the lumpsum budget structure but authorize a lumpsum budgeting pilot project for SCBM schools.

We recommend that DOE and DAGS revise their memorandum of agreement and DAGS determine how it can give Oahu schools a level of service equal to that on the Neighbor Islands. We also recommend that DAGS Central Services Division be responsible for all informally bid major repairs in addition to nonbid repairs. The bid threshold should be raised to \$8,000 for informal bids and \$25,000 for formal bids.

The department does not agree with our recommendation that the board should develop policies to clarify the statewide core curriculum. The department feels policies are in place with the Foundation Program and expects roles to be clarified by Project Ke Au Hou. The department agrees that it can better manage curriculum by aligning the written, taught, and tested curriculum. New curriculum guides are currently in draft stages. The department says it may have difficulty aligning the tested curriculum given the need for fiscal resources and other requirements.

The department does not agree with our recommendation to pilot test its proposed lumpsum budget on SCBM schools. It does, however, agree with the recommendations on R&M. The Department of Accounting and General Services did not respond to our draft report.

Marion M. Higa
State Auditor
State of Hawaii

Office of the Auditor
465 South King Street, Room 500
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
(808) 587-0800
FAX (808) 587-0830