

OVERVIEW

THE AUDITOR
STATE OF HAWAII

Audit of the After-School Plus (A+) Program of the Department of Education

Summary

The Office of the Auditor conducted an audit of the Department of Education's After-School Plus (A+) Program. The A+ Program was implemented in Spring 1990 to increase the availability of quality after-school care for latchkey children. As the first state subsidized after-school care program in the nation, A+ is funded by general fund appropriations and fees paid by parents.

The program now operates at 175 school sites and served more than 25,000 children attending public schools during the 1995-96 school year (SY). The program cost the State approximately \$13 million during SY1995-96. Parents paid the State about \$4.1 million in fees that year.

We found that the Department of Education has not managed program resources properly. It has not adequately screened A+ Program participants for eligibility, thereby increasing program costs and compromising the intent of the Legislature that the A+ Program serve latchkey public school students. It has not ensured that A+ Program sites operated by the department are staffed appropriately. A+ sites are overstaffed, staff do not have desired qualifications, and nepotism is common.

We also found a variety of programmatic and financial shortcomings. Children enrolled in A+ do not have equal access to school facilities and program services. A+ sites do not follow established management controls to ensure proper program collections and deposits. The department cannot be sure that all program fees are collected and deposited into the state treasury. And the department does not use A+ Program cost information to properly manage the program. Better use of cost information might have enabled the department to continue providing snacks to children.

Recommendations and Response

We recommend the department eliminate unnecessary program costs and capture revenues the State is due by ensuring program enrollment is limited to eligible students and by following department collection practices outlined in its business services handbook and in the *A+ Operations Manual*. We also recommend district coordinators verify the enrollment and attendance data reported by schools. The department should staff A+ sites according to attendance patterns. We recommend the department adopt a policy on nepotism.

The department concurred with our findings and stated that it will take corrective action to improve screening for program eligibility, staffing, hiring procedures, collection procedures, fiscal controls, and program monitoring.

The department did not agree with our recommendation that A+ be staffed to program attendance. The department states that it has changed enrollment reports to include children's names and fees collected. It believes this new report will result in better enrollment information to properly staff A+ sites. The department also indicated that staffing can be adjusted to accommodate significant enrollment changes.

The department commented that district coordinators verify enrollment and attendance by reviewing monthly enrollment and collections reports and by making periodic visits to A+ sites. Because these are time-consuming tasks, the department is evaluating the allocation of resources to support the monitoring functions, including involvement of its Internal Audit office.

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