

# OVERVIEW

## *Management Audit of the Department of Education's Hawaiian Studies Program*

Report No. 08-02, January 2008

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### Summary

We conducted this audit in response to Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 74, Senate Draft 1, of the 2007 legislative session, calling for a financial, program, and management audit of the Hawaiian Studies Program.

We found that the role of the Hawaiian Studies Program, especially its kupuna component, has not been clearly defined and is in need of reevaluation. Lacking accountability for the program's intended outcomes, the Department of Education is unable to show evidence of its effectiveness. In addition, vague guidelines and weak oversight over the schools that receive the bulk of the Hawaiian Studies funds have allowed resources intended to employ kūpuna to be diverted to purposes with little or no connection to a Hawaiian education.

Longstanding stakeholder dissatisfaction with the program—particularly its centerpiece, the kupuna component—can be traced to a lack of leadership and guidance by the Board of Education and the Department of Education in providing direction and focus for the program. The board and department leadership have accepted unworkable plans and failed to establish a process to determine the effectiveness of kūpuna, leaving the program without direction and in decline for more than a decade. The program has also struggled to adapt to changing priorities and strategic directions affecting the entire public school system, such as the federal No Child Left Behind initiative and the State's Reinventing Education Act of 2004.

On the operational level, a lack of guidance and oversight has permitted schools to receive funding without accounting for predetermined deliverables and even divert funding for unauthorized purposes. We found expenditures for office supplies, computers, and furniture made with program funds that did not meet spending guidelines. While most of the funding for the Hawaiian Studies Program is intended to provide for the services of kūpuna in elementary schools, over 20 schools no longer employ kūpuna, but use the funds allocated for kupuna payroll for other purposes with no guidance on achieving comparable outcomes. Our survey of individuals on the department's kupuna payroll listing indicates that significant numbers of kūpuna have concerns about working conditions that differ from guidelines, training, or ongoing support. Given that \$2.8 million provided to schools over the past three years as not used to hire kūpuna, and instead primarily spent on operating expenditure, supplies, and capital items, we found that there is a need to review the allocation of these resources and ensure that the kūpuna receive sufficient support to be effective. Finally, we found that schools purchase textbooks that have been criticized by Hawaiian stakeholders for culturally inappropriate content, contravening a board policy in the process.



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## Recommendations and Response

We recommend that the Board of Education reevaluate the State's compliance effort with the constitutional mandate and the Hawaiian Studies Program's role in that effort. The reevaluation should address purpose, expected outcomes, and any needed modifications for the kupuna component; sufficiency of community resources; and the role of School Community Councils in guiding cultural involvement at schools. We also recommend that the Department of Education require and empower the Hawaiian Studies Program administrator to provide better guidance and oversight, including holding schools accountable for the proper use of Hawaiian Studies Program allocations.

Finally, we recommend that the Hawaiian Studies Program administrator clarify fund allocation guidelines for schools to designate kupuna services or programs with equivalent objectives as priority uses for the funds, identify expected outcomes, and provide the oversight necessary to ensure that funds are used as intended.

The board and department responded to a draft of the report, expressing appreciation for the Auditor's recommendations and their commitment to the program and actions suggested by the report.

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