

HawaiiKidsCAN - 2022 HIDOE Strategic Plan Survey Guide

Our Recommendations

Overview

The Hawaii State Department of Education (DOE) and Hawaii State Board of Education (BOE) began a process to develop and approve a multi-year strategic plan for Hawaii's education system. The department has been operating without a strategic plan since the [2017-2020 plan](#) expired. While a new plan, the [2030 Promise Plan](#), was presented to the BOE in 2020, it was never approved or revisited.

The BOE is moving ahead with a [timeline](#) to adopt a new strategic plan (not the 2030 Promise Plan) by February 2023. As part of its stakeholder engagement efforts, the BOE created a [29 question survey](#) to gather feedback by October 11.

Upon reviewing the survey, the HawaiiKidsCAN team was concerned about the construction of questions. While the questions touch on important topics, the lack of accompanying context may make it very difficult for all respondents to answer with confidence. We've found the [2021 Hawaii DOE Data Book](#) and federal ESSA [reports](#) to be useful companion tools when completing the survey.

We also feel that the choices presented do not demonstrate the various trade-offs may be required to prioritize certain initiatives. As such, this document is intended to be a guide for survey-takers with important context and our recommendations, similar to the concept of a voter guide used in states like California and Washington to help with ballot measures. The sample responses are the product of our research and advocacy, and we recognize that other folks may bring different perspectives and opinions.

We've also considered how the DOE and BOE could align with the [University of Hawaii Strategic Plan 2023–2029](#) that is currently being developed as an alternative.

[2022 HIDOE Strategic Plan Survey](#)



Hawai'iKidsCAN's Framework for Student Success

All of our recommendations are guided by our vision of a strategic plan framework that is ambitious and unapologetically focused on student success.

By 2030:

- **Student Outcome Goals - improving life trajectories**
 - 90% of students are proficient with core academics (language arts, math, and science), with no larger than 10% achievement gap
 - 90% of students complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) before graduation
 - 90% of students graduate on-time from high school
 - 90% of students complete a career and technical education (CTE) pathway leading to financial stability
- **Transformational Innovation Goals - moving Hawaii's schools into 2023 and beyond**
 - 75% of students participate in meaningful experiences with community organizations each year
 - 75% of all DOE staff are trained on trauma-informed education
 - 75% of students are enrolled in computer science courses each year
 - 75% of students are enrolled in a postsecondary institution or program upon graduation



Survey Guide

How to use this guide:

For multiple choice questions, we've **bolded and highlighted** the answer we recommend. For open ended questions, we've **highlighted** our answer. For each question, we've provided helpful context for our responses in a lightly shaded box.

1. What is your overall opinion of how well public schools are performing in Hawaii?

- Extremely positive
- Somewhat positive
- **Somewhat negative**
- Extremely negative

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

While we've been inspired by how countless educators, students, and families have stepped up and shown resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic, the reality is that our system has lots of work to do to move student outcomes. According to 2020-2021 results from the Smarter Balanced Assessment, just 50% of students were proficient in English Language Arts, and a dismal 32% in math. This is reflected in recent [NAEP test results](#), which showed that student outcomes were set back decades. Student results lagged before the pandemic, leaving little room for any disruption.

2. What is the biggest factor that shaped your opinion of Hawaii's schools?

Our somewhat negative overall opinion is the result of analyzing our public schools at both micro and macro levels. There is no doubt that these last few years have been incredibly challenging during the Covid-19 pandemic, with the pressure cooker of this crisis highlighting strengths and weaknesses in our system. On the one hand, many schools and educators stepped up in a big way to support their kids, families, and communities. Schools like Waianae Elementary and Kamaile Academy found new ways that strengthened relationships with families, offered digital equity supports, and addressed vital needs like food distribution. At a high level, however, the system didn't always set schools and kids up for success, with missed opportunities to streamline communications, operations and support. The idea of "empowerment" became actualized as "abandonment," with each school left to figure out big issues like distance learning and tutoring, versus a centralized approach that other states used successfully. In terms of student data, we still need to engage candidly about the resources our schools and families need, and the fact that student achievement data should be triggering loud alarm bells. Overall, it is both too easy to spin a rosy story that learning loss doesn't exist and that student outcomes don't matter, and also too easy to say the situation is hopeless and ignore the schools and educators going the extra mile.

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

We prefer to take a nuanced approach to how our schools and system have been performing, yet the learning crisis being experienced by our kids makes it impossible for us to feel positively about the current situation.



3. How important is the quality of public schools to Hawaii's success as a state?

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

With nearly 85% of students in public schools, including charter schools, the success of our public system is ultimately a determining factor in the overall success of our state. The students enrolled in Hawaii's public schools are our future, and the number of opportunities and options they'll have in the future will directly correlate with the foundation we lay for them at the K-12 level. However, we want to note that a cross-community mindset of abundance that fully leverages our local community organizations, independent schools and employers as learning resources is a powerful way to gain more capacity to address the diverse needs of our kids. We also believe that hybrid homeschooling presents some interesting and flexible options to kids and families.

4. If you had money to invest in the public education system in Hawaii, how would you spend it? Select only 3 priority areas.

- **Improving reading and writing at all grade levels**
- **Improving math and science skills**
- Developing more excellent teachers
- Expanding early learning opportunities
- Increasing resources to underserved communities
- Improving social, emotional, and mental health supports
- Providing tutoring services
- Ensuring all students have access to fine arts programs
- Increasing afterschool and summer program opportunities
- Expanding/improving athletic opportunities
- Expanding gifted and talented programs
- Prioritizing preparation for college
- Expanding Career and Technical Education programs
- Increasing dual language programs
- Increasing Hawaiian immersion programs
- Recognizing and rewarding our best teachers
- Ensuring instructional materials are research- and evidence-based
- Ensuring students with disabilities have the same opportunities as their peers
- Prioritizing student engagement
- **Prioritizing family engagement**
- Other (please specify)

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

While there are many quality options on this list, we thought it was important to focus on foundational academic skills as a door to unlocking life, career and community opportunities. We also felt that the first two options were some of the only focused on student outcomes, while nearly all of the rest represent school-based strategies (like



tutoring service and afterschool opportunities) or system inputs (staff capacity and educational materials). We believe that it is important for education systems to have clear goals in mind, such as the first two responses, and then prioritize strategies such as tutoring, afterschool enrichment, or learning resources directly to families in response to those goals. Additionally, we view family engagement as a core element of a healthy school culture, which in turn has a positive impact on students, educators, families and the community.

5. How important is it for Hawaii to ensure that all students have access to rigorous curriculum and high-quality learning standards?

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

Our students deserve learning experiences that will push them to reach their potential. While we acknowledge the importance and necessity of meeting students where they are, we also strongly encourage the education system to intentionally prioritize curriculum and standards that take all students to the top. Academic rigor is key to stimulating brain development and forging a growth mindset. A note here is to ensure transparent definitions of “rigorous curriculum” and “high-quality learning standards.” Resources like [EdReports](#) are useful for independent curriculum quality reviews.

6. How important is it for Hawaii to ensure that all teachers are utilizing high-quality evidenced-based instructional practices and materials?

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

Our students deserve learning experiences that will push them to reach their utmost potential, so we need to ensure a transparent definition of “high-quality evidenced-based instructional practices and materials.” Questions 5 and 6 should be a package deal, as national education leaders like John White have been quick to [point out](#) that “good curriculum is essential but not sufficient; it has to be part of a focused effort to train and support teachers in order for it to have its intended effect.” We believe curriculum cannot simply be purchased and deposited in schools. Instead, instructional supports should be in place to streamline teachers’ knowledge and ease-of-use with these materials. We also need to focus on the science of reading, so that student brains are developed in an appropriate and effective manner.



7. How important is it for Hawaii to ensure that all students have access to meaningful opportunities to learn Hawaiian language, culture, and connection to 'āina (land)?

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

Learning the Hawaiian language and culture should be foundational to living, working, and learning in Hawaii. In order to prioritize this area, we need to have teachers who are proficient in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i and schedule flexibility so that students can spend meaningful time connecting with cultural and 'āina resources. We believe alignment to UH's 2023–2029 strategic plan would be relevant here:

- UH will reduce equity gaps for Hawaiian student access and success at all levels.
- UH will Increase employment of Hawaiians across UH, especially at faculty and executive levels.
- UH will create opportunities for all students, faculty, staff, executives and regents to inform their work within the UH System by learning about Hawaiian language, culture, knowledge and Hawai'i's difficult history with colonization.
- UH will play an active role in improving the lives of Native Hawaiians across the islands and reconciling past injustices.

8. How well do you think Hawaii is doing in ensuring that all students at, or above, grade level are given meaningful opportunities to continue to accelerate their learning?

- Very well
- Moderately well
- **Not very well**
- Not at all well

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

In terms of [academic data](#), less students are exceeding academic proficiency in 2020-2021 versus 2018-2019. Overall, only 16% of students are exceeding academic proficiency in reading and math, which is morally unconscionable. The percentage of students graduating with honors recognitions and achieving passing Advanced Placement exam scores are close to the same level during that time period. We also need to be on the lookout to make sure underrepresented students are able to take AP courses and receive scores that confer college credit. On the positive end, the percentage of high school graduates participating in [dual credit programs](#) and earning 6 or more college credits prior to their high school graduation has steadily increased.

9. How well do you think Hawaii is doing in ensuring that students below grade level are provided the resources necessary to meet or exceed grade level standards?



- Very well
- Moderately well
- Not very well
- **Not at all well**

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

It is impossible to look at Hawaii's academic data and feel that enough is being done for our most high-need students. Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, a significant population of Hawaii students struggled to reach proficiency in basic skills like literacy and mathematics. Real achievement gaps exist, with just 12% of students in Special Education proficient in reading and 8% in math, in the 2020-2021 school year, for example. Now more than ever, high-dosage tutoring, extended school hours, and family engagement are strategies that can move the needle. First and foremost, we must be honest that this is a problem and pledge to do everything possible to change this reality.

10. How well do you think Hawaii is doing in ensuring that all students graduate high school prepared to enter and succeed in college after graduation?

- Very well
- Moderately well
- **Not very well**
- Not at all well

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

As we've referenced before, our students remain on a shaky academic foundation. Low rates of [FAFSA completion](#) also indicate that students will not be prepared to pay for higher education. To ensure quality student outcomes, the DOE and BOE could align with goals from UH's 2023–2029 strategic plan:

- UH will increase participation in post-secondary education statewide.
- UH will provide all students the necessary support for them to succeed.
- UH will fully embrace multiple modalities of instruction that recognize changing times and widely differing student preferences, needs and goals.
- UH will actively monitor and report on the post-graduation success of its students.

11. How well do you think Hawaii is doing in ensuring that every student has access to career and technical education pathways so they will be prepared to enter the workforce and earn a living immediately after graduation?

- Very well
- **Moderately well**
- Not very well
- Not at all well

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

Hawaii has made great progress in terms of offering career readiness programs and



academies in schools. However, [more work](#) needs to be done to demonstrate that Hawaii students are actually earning credentials that most directly align to high growth, high wage jobs in Hawaii. Given the high cost of living in Hawaii, our state's generational sustainability depends on ensuring our kids have the earning power to afford to live in Hawaii with the choice to own a home or start a family. We believe alignment to UH's 2023–2029 strategic plan would also be relevant here:

- UH will prepare professionals to fulfill statewide needs in occupations that are essential to community well-being: education, health, technology, skilled trades and sustainability/resilience.
- UH will increase non-traditional offerings that eliminate barriers of time, place, and pace for those seeking upskilling or career change opportunities.
- UH will partner with employers to ensure the necessary preparation and support for students to succeed in their careers.
- UH will prepare all its graduates for life-long learning, innovation and entrepreneurship.

12. How well do you think Hawaii is doing in ensuring that students with disabilities have access to the same learning opportunities and learning as their peers?

- Very well
- Moderately well
- **Not very well**
- Not at all well

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

According to the [Special Education Advisory Council](#), Hawaii still lags behind national standards in terms of students with Individualized Education Plans spending time in inclusive general education classrooms. Without further awareness and investment in individualized supports and strategies to meet their unique needs, students with disabilities will continue to struggle and see significant gaps in opportunity and access compared to their peers.

13. How well do you think Hawaii is doing ensuring that all students have access to fine arts programming (art, music, dance, theater, etc.) as a guaranteed part of their foundational learning experience?

- Very well
- Moderately well
- **Not very well**
- Not at all well

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

It is difficult to accurately gauge this question without better data. We do know, however, that the Covid-19 pandemic impacted students' ability to participate in these programs. The state's art education initiative, first enacted through Act 306/01 in 2001 and working through the [Hawaii Arts Alliance](#), known as the [ARTS FIRST strategic plan](#), has not been updated since 2018, making it difficult to identify where we are at



and what needs to be done. One study by [Americans for the Arts](#) found 236 nonprofit arts organizations within Hawaii, but there is limited data to identify how they promote access to the arts for K-12 students. Furthermore, we also are interested in innovative programs that would enable students to earn music and art credit for experiences with local community organizations, so that learning about the arts can happen more freely outside of the walls of school classrooms.

14. How important is it for Hawaii to develop, support, recognize, reward, and retain more high-quality teachers in all schools?

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

While this is incredibly important, we know that this issue is complex for a variety of reasons. Geographically, Hawaii poses unique barriers to the recruitment and retention of teachers in general, and across the nation, rural and high-needs schools are struggling to fill vacancies with licensed educators. In tandem with the controversy around the definition and requirement of “high-quality” teachers, these are serious concerns that the DOE and BOE should prioritize if we are to be able to ensure that every child will have access to a teacher with the training and skills necessary to provide a first-class education. We urge the DOE and BOE to clarify their definitions of “high-quality” teachers in addition to pursuing innovative and sustainable strategies for the recruitment and retention of these exceptional educators. We also believe our Hawaii Teacher Compensation Study and Recommendations [issue brief](#) from 2020 outlines some key principles for Hawaii, such as

1. Emphasize Responsibility and Incentives
2. Frontload Salary Increases
3. Prioritize Excellence/Difficulty/Scarcity.

15. How important is it that Hawaii ensures that it increases the diversity of teachers and school leaders across the state?

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

Based on [reports](#) from the 2020-2021 school year, there is a significant imbalance of ethnicity between Hawaii’s teachers and students. While data on ethnicity can be misleading, due to the high number of multi-ethnic individuals in Hawaii, it’s clear that Native Hawaiian, Filipino and Micronesian students are unlikely to see their backgrounds reflected in their teachers. It is unclear if reliable public data are available on school and system leader ethnicity, but anecdotal evidence suggests that leadership ranks tend to be disproportionately Japanese-American males. Regardless, this directly contrasts with a breadth of research on teacher-student racial/ethnic



matching, which indicates better outcomes for students who are exposed to educators with similar backgrounds to their own.

16. How important is it that Hawaii invests time and resources to develop high-quality principals to lead all schools?

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

Given the impact principals have on the entire culture of a school, it's obvious that school leadership development should be a priority. It's extremely concerning that Hawaii has not replenished its school leader pipeline, with reports to the BOE showing that nearly 50% of current DOE principals are either eligible for retirement or will be eligible in the next five years. While there are great local programs via the DOE's Leadership Institute, we must act with urgency to build a strong bench of school leaders. Even in the event that most principal vacancies are filled, a primarily novice principal population with fewer experienced individuals to serve as guides and mentors is cause for concern. We've heard from aspiring school leaders that the DOE has overly restrictive and burdensome requirements for becoming a DOE principal, thereby limiting the number of talented individuals who want to go through the DOE principal eligibility bottleneck.

17. How important is it for Hawaii to ensure that all teachers have access during the workday to the time, supports, and resources necessary to succeed?

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

While this question seems obvious, it is missing important context and definitions. Does this mean longer prep periods, larger classroom supply budgets, or more autonomy over professional development opportunities? What are the tradeoffs for any of the strategies contained within this question? For example, longer teacher prep periods may require extending the school day or week in order to avoid reducing instructional time. Another unintended consequence may be larger class sizes to balance the number of students in available classrooms if teachers are rotating between longer prep periods. Similarly, an increase in professional development opportunities may shorten the summer for teachers. The devil is in the details here, and we fear a shortsighted plan designed by individuals who are not close to the day-to-day inner workings of a school may not be able to create solutions that meet the unique needs of each individual school building



18. How important is it for Hawaii to ensure that all teachers have access to high-quality effective professional learning that meets their individual needs and growth areas?

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

More context and clarity is needed here. In the case of professional development, how do we define “high-quality” and “effective” in terms of reviewing programs and ensuring outcomes? Does “professional learning” have to be part of the PDE3 system, or how else could the system recognize external learning experiences? What about access to instructional coaching, mentorship and peer communities of practice? Furthermore, will increased requirements in training have a cost for teachers, or compensation for the extra time required?

19. How well do you think Hawaii is doing in ensuring that students are taught by highly-qualified and effective teachers?

- Very well
- Moderately well
- **Not very well**
- Not at all well

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

This is another question of inputs versus outcomes, as 96% of Hawaii teachers are fully licensed and 38% have advanced degrees. Given how much student achievement outcomes are lagging, are these still the right teacher metrics to track? If not, then what else is available? It has proven to be extremely difficult to find recent public information on the results from the Educator Effectiveness System (EES) database. It would be helpful to know the percentage of teachers rating at the Highly Effective, Effective, Marginal, and Unsatisfactory levels (in the aggregate so as to not be personally identifiable), as well as the competencies associated with each level.

20. How well do you think Hawaii is doing in ensuring that all schools are led by highly-qualified and effective principals?

- Very well
- Moderately well
- **Not very well**
- Not at all well

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:



As with question 19, the lack of public data makes it extremely difficult to answer this question at the system level. As we stated earlier, we expect significant turnover of principals in the next five years, which will lead to a serious loss of experience in school leadership in many schools. Additionally, based on student academic outcomes, it's clear more support is needed. On the Comprehensive Evaluation System for School Administrators (CESSA), it would be helpful to know where Hawaii's school leaders rate for each of the five domains:

- Professional growth and learning
- School planning and progress
- School culture
- Professional qualities and instructional leadership
- Stakeholder support and engagement

21. How important is it for Hawaii to hold the Department of Education, state level, complex area leaders, and schools accountable for improving outcomes for all students.

- **Extremely important**
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

Families have the right to know that our public education system is doing everything in its power to help kids have the opportunity to reach their potential. These young lives and futures are too precious for any other option. To that end, our entire system needs to act with a shared sense of kuleana (responsibility) to move the needle for kids.

22. How well do you think Hawaii is doing in ensuring that state and complex areas engage with families in an authentic, transparent, and timely manner so families can make the best decisions for their children?

- Very well
- Moderately well
- Not very well
- **Not at all well**

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

Only 21% of parents responded to the [School Quality Survey](#) for the 2021-2022 school year, which is a red flag. Of those parents, 85% elementary school parents indicated high satisfaction with parent engagement, while this was 67% for high school parents. Anecdotally, it seems that many parents do not understand what a School Community Council is and how to get involved. Furthermore, even family engagement activities such as back-to-school open houses do not seem universally adopted across the system. While the Covid-19 pandemic was an extreme situation, we heard from parents who reported finding out information about their school and DOE procedures via local media and not official memos.



23. How well do you think Hawaii is doing in ensuring that all students have access to mental and physical health care, social and emotional supports, nutrition services, and other wraparound supports?

- Very well
- Moderately well
- **Not very well**
- Not at all well

Context from HawaiiKidsCAN:

According to data presented to the BOE, Hawaii lags behind the national average in terms of offering school psychologists. Hawaii also trends higher than the national average on reports of major depressive episodes by kids, and right at the national average for adolescent and young adult suicide rate. Other measures like the School Quality Survey are more favorable. Promising efforts are underway in Hawaii, including greater access to trauma-informed trainings for educators, growing interest in the Community Schools Model, and statewide access to distance mental health sessions via Hazel Health. The expansion of these services and awareness of these services, as well as an increase in the availability of school psychologists, will help narrow the gap to better promote the social-emotional health of all Hawaii students. We need to address both the mental health needs and academic challenges facing students, and this is not a binary choice of one or the other.

24. Is there anything else you would like Hawaii's education leaders to know as they develop the multi-year strategic plan for the next several years?

Coming out of the massive disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, the new BOE and DOE strategic plan is extremely high stakes for our system, but especially for our students. With unprecedented levels of learning loss impacting students across the K-12 continuum, our state system needs to be in disaster recovery mode, acting with clear-eyed vision, purpose and practice. First and foremost, we need to acknowledge there is a problem and that change is clearly needed. As such, we'd suggest following these principles.

1. Reflect deeply

What are the DOE's deeper reflections on the 2017-2020 Strategic Plan and why many key targets have not been reached, including chronic absenteeism, the achievement gap, and foundational academic proficiency? This reflection feels highly valuable and informative as we move ahead. How will the DOE highlight and elevate the practices of schools performing at a high level, especially those schools with high numbers of student subgroups that traditionally struggle in our school system? We have tremendous knowledge and expertise in our system that we can harness, and we shouldn't be shy about elevating local examples.

2. Set big goals

As the BOE begins to formulate how it will tackle this intensive eight month process to approve a new plan, we urge BOE members to consider this simple but powerful student-centered framework for success:

By 2030: 90% of students are proficient with core academics (language arts, math, and science), with no larger than 10% achievement gap; 90% of students complete Free



Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) before graduation; 90% of students graduate on-time from high school; 90% of students complete a career and technical education (CTE) pathway leading to financial stability; 75% of students participate in meaningful experiences with community organizations each year; 75% of all DOE staff are trained on trauma-informed education; 75% of students are enrolled in computer science courses each year; and 75% of students are enrolled in a postsecondary institution or program upon graduation.

3. Engage everyone

This strategic plan is an opportunity to enable our entire community to move forward with collective action so that we can all play a role in supporting kids. Upon reading the final strategic plan, legislators and funders should know exactly where resources are needed and prioritized, community organizations can identify how they can add capacity to fill pukas and advance learning, and parents will have a clear understanding of how their voices are being heard will drive accountability. The plan should also at least recognize parallel efforts like strategic planning at the University of Hawaii to create stronger alignment and transparency for a P-20 pathway of student success and outcomes.