




STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
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OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

February 7, 2011

TO: The Honorable Garrett Toguchi, Chairperson  
Board of Education

FROM:   
Kathryn S. Matayoshi  
Superintendent

SUBJECT: Discussion/Recommendation for Board Action on the Closure of  
Puuhale Elementary School

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Puuhale Elementary School be closed.

2. RECOMMENDED EFFECTIVE DATE

June 30, 2011.

3. RECOMMENDED COMPLIANCE DATE (if different from the effective date)

Not applicable.

4. DISCUSSION

a. Conditions leading to the recommendation.

Pursuant to Chapter 8-38 ("Consolidation of Public Schools), Hawaii Administrative Rules, the Department initiated a study of the possible consolidation of elementary schools in the Farrington complex because it appeared, based on a comparison of enrollment at the Farrington complex elementary schools with the inventory of classrooms, that the supply of classrooms exceeded the current and projected enrollment by a sufficient margin to indicate that two of the existing elementary schools could be closed.

One of the elementary schools, Linapuni, is in the process of being converted from a K-2 school to a pre-K, K, and grade 1 school, to meet the needs of the children in Kuhio Park Terrance and its immediate environs for preschool programs that prepare the children for kindergarten. The conversion of Linapuni to a pre-K through grade 1 school means the grade 2 students at Linapuni will be transferred to neighboring elementary schools. In this study, Linapuni is included because of its overall role in

the enrollment picture of the Farrington complex. This study did not consider the closure of Linapuni.

The Department solicited and incorporated input from school administrators and school community councils in the complex.

The enrollment of the nine schools, the number of classrooms needed to accommodate the current enrollment, the number of classrooms, and the classroom surplus or shortage, are shown in the table below:

	SY 2010-11 enrollment	SY 2010-11 classroom need	Classroom inventory	Classroom excess (shortage)
Fern	497	22	30	8
Kaewai	346	19	30	11
Kalihi	294	16	30	14
Kalihi Kai	605	28	45	17
Kalihi Uka	251	13	25	12
Kalihi Waena	572	29	33	4
Kapalama	668	31	37	6
Linapuni	255	18	16	(2)
Puuhale	234	11	21	10
Total	3722	187	267	80

See the consolidation report, page 4 for the enrollment history and enrollment projection for elementary schools in the Farrington complex. Enrollment has been relatively stable and is projected to increase slightly.

As provided by Chapter 38, the Department held a public hearing on the draft consolidation study on December 16, 2010 at Kalakaua Middle School. Public testimony was overwhelmingly supportive of the status quo. The consolidation study, revised following the public hearing, together with written testimony received prior to, at, and subsequent to the public hearing, notes of oral testimony presented at the public hearing, two petitions presented at the public hearing, and the sign-in sheet at the public hearing are all attached to this memorandum or, for the larger files, are available on the Department's school consolidation website.

There are two reasons for the recommendation to close Puuhale Elementary. One is to save money. The estimated annual savings in FY 2011-12 are about \$667,000, without considering possible savings from consolidating the special education staff and savings and efficiencies that would result if some DOE state and/or district office functions were relocated to the Puuhale campus if the school were closed (consolidation report, pages 26-27). The second reason is that as the subsidy for small schools is reduced over time, it will be increasingly difficult for students to receive the same level of educational opportunities that are available at neighboring schools.

The table below shows the weighted student formula allocation to the eight elementary schools (excluding Linapuni, which is not comparable) on a per student basis:

	Enrollment including pre-K		WSF Allocation/Student		
	2010-11	2011-12	2010-11	2011-12	Incr/(decr)
Fern	502	522	4,512	4,631	119
Kaewai	350	358	5,052	4,625	-427
Kalihi	300	295	5,291	5,039	-253
Kalihi Kai	608	596	4,479	4,534	55
Kalihi Uka	257	270	5,191	4,628	-536
Kalihi Waena	579	587	4,421	4,536	115
Kapalama	674	655	4,285	4,364	79
Puuhale	234	227	5,643	5,447	-196

The per-student WSF allocations are projected to decrease for all the small schools, while the per-student WSF allocation is projected to increase for the large schools.

Puuhale's academic performance has been on a par with other schools in the complex, after considering the schools' demographics. The data in the table are medians for the most recent three years of the percentages of students economically disadvantaged, the percentages of students who are proficient or better in reading and math, as measured by the Hawaii state assessment, broken down by students who are and are not, economically disadvantaged, and the "achievement gap" between students who are economically disadvantaged and those who are not. These data show that Puuhale's closure is not warranted because of any deficiencies in its educational program.

	Percent Economically Disadvantaged	Percent Proficient in Reading			Percent Proficient in Math		
		Not Economically Disadvantaged	Economically Disadvantaged	Gap	Not Economically Disadvantaged	Economically Disadvantaged	Gap
Fern	80%	55	40	-15	44	34	-10
Kaewai	83%	65	44	-21	63	26	-37
Kalihi	72%	72	47	-25	60	37	-23
Kalihi Kai	72%	53	48	- 5	47	38	- 9
Kalihi Uka	60%	62	57	- 5	55	46	- 9
Kalihi Waena	77%	67	50	-17	63	43	-20
Kapalama	58%	76	63	-13	57	48	- 9
Puuhale	72%	59	54	- 5	57	32	-25

There is capacity at Kalihi Kai to accommodate all the Puuhale students. It will result in Kalihi Kai's enrollment increasing to 833 students, making it the largest elementary school in the Honolulu district and the 23<sup>rd</sup> largest elementary school in the state.

b. Previous action of the Board on the same or similar matter

The consolidation of schools in the Farrington complex has not been considered by the Board. In May 2009 the Board approved the closure of Wailupe Valley Elementary School and the transfer of its students to Aina Haina Elementary School, and in February 2010 the Board approved the closure of Keanae School, formerly a K-3 school. Keanae students had been attending Hana School since the opening of SY 2005-06. Consistent with the Department's recommendation, the Board voted not to consolidate the following schools on the dates shown below:

Kohala schools	August 19, 2010
Maunaloa Elementary School	September 16, 2010
Kaaawa Elementary School	October 7, 2010
Waialua schools	October 21, 2010

The Board has my January 31 recommendation to close Liliuokalani Elementary School.

c. Other policies affected

None.

d. Arguments in support of the recommendation

See above.

e. Arguments against the recommendation

Three general arguments have been expressed about the possible closure of Puuhale.

First is that the school provides a nurturing environment for its students. This is true. However, Kalihi Kai parents and students would make the same argument – that Kalihi Kai provides a nurturing environment for its students.

Second is that larger class sizes for Puuhale students, as well as students at Kalihi Kai, would result if Puuhale were closed. Actually, the student-teacher ratio at Kalihi Kai is lower than at Puuhale (14 vs 15), and there is no reason to believe that the ratio at Kalihi Kai would exceed the current ratio at Puuhale if Puuhale were closed and its students transferred to Kalihi Kai. The table on page 2 of this memorandum shows Puuhale's enrollment currently requires 11 classrooms, and that Kalihi Kai currently has 17 more classrooms than are needed to accommodate its current enrollment.

Third is that Puuhale students who now walk to school will have a longer and more dangerous walk to school if they have to go to Kalihi Kai. It is true that the walk would be farther for most Puuhale students. It is also true that students who walked to Kalihi Kai would need to cross Dillingham Boulevard at a signalized intersection. The consolidation study concluded that while the distance is farther for most Puuhale students, and most would have to cross Dillingham Boulevard (at a signalized intersection) to get to school, the total distance from home to Kalihi Kai is not

significantly increased. The two schools are ½-mile apart. While most walking students to Kalihi Kai would need to cross Dillingham Boulevard, more than half the Puuhale students live on the makai side of Nimitz Highway and, if they walk to Puuhale, must cross Nimitz Highway (at a signalized intersection).

f. Findings and conclusions of the Board committee

To be determined.

g. Other agencies or departments of the State of Hawaii involved in the action

None.

h. Possible reaction of the public, professional organizations, unions, DOE staff and/or others to the recommendations

As noted above, both written and oral testimony submitted prior to, at, and subsequent to the public hearing was unanimous in favor of keeping Puuhale open.

DOE also received a petition with the names of 132 Puuhale students "who don't want the school to close down."

i. Educational implication

See above.

j. Personnel implications

Consolidation will eliminate all of the positions at Puuhale School. All regular full- and part-time Puuhale employees will be placed elsewhere in the Honolulu district.

k. Facilities implications

Closure of Puuhale School will make the facilities available to other users. There is an extensive list of prospective uses of the facilities on pages 26-27 of the consolidation study.

l. Financial implications

The closure of Puuhale is estimated to save approximately \$667,000 annually, including fringes of approximately \$119,000 that will be reflected in the Department of Budget and Finance. Additional financial savings, operational efficiencies, and educational improvements will result from the reuse of the school's facilities, depending on the futures uses of the facility. The Department intends to place a portion of the anticipated first-year savings from consolidation at the disposal of the complex area superintendent this school year and next to facilitate the transition for students and staff at both Puuhale and Kalihi Kai.

**5. OTHER SUPPLEMENTARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

None.

KSM:RGM:ck

Attachment: Consolidation study

- c: Calvin Nomiyama, Acting Complex Area Superintendent
- Lorelei Karasaki, Principal, Puuhale Elementary School
- Stanley Kayatani, Principal, Kalihi Kai Elementary School
- Randolph G. Moore, Assistant Superintendent