

Social Impacts of the possible closure of Ke'anae School

Per our meeting on August 5, 2009 community input.

The list below attempts to look at each aspect of the social impact and clearly define the affects each has on the children, their families, and the community at large. Many of the comments are said from experience and is a fact of the impact further consolidation would cause due to the Ke'anae classes being presently closed and all children bussed to Hāna School.

1. The main impact the parents and community are concerned of is the safety of their children during their travel to and from school. Here are some main points they are concerned with during the children's travel:
 - a. Presently their children are riding a bus that is mainly unsupervised. Because of the bus driver's limited ability to regulate children's actions and behaviors, they are being allowed to unsafely ride the bus, actions such as behaving with no regard to others, acting out hostility towards other children, standing and playing in rows and center isles, speaking with inappropriate language which other children and especially younger children should not be exposed to, actions of sexual and verbal harassment, fighting and violence. These actions should not be tolerated in any manner and the children are constantly being exposed to and allowed to act in such way because they are un-chaperoned and due to the length of time they are together.
 - b. The road hazards the bus needs to travel through are dangerous at times. The road hazards mentioned are rock and land slides, objects ranging to boulders or trees on the road, the many turns, traffic, rain, slippery roads, fog, limited sight distance, and other inexperienced drivers (inexperienced of the Hāna Highway.)
 - c. The conditions of the children due to the type of travel are car sickness both ways which alters and effects the rest of their day at school. Many of the children get sick on the bus because of the turns and start their school day feeling like this. Many times because of motion sickness they are unexcited or unable to start their day of school.

- d. If there were ever a mechanical problem or breakdown of the bus the children would be stranded for a long period of time. The bus driver would need to divide his time between the children and finding a solution where many times there is no reception for the cell phone use and travel each way would take time for an alternative transport to come.
 - e. Speed is another safety concern. Speed of both the other vehicles and the bus driver. Many times just being comfortable with driving on this road will allow bad habits to form and speeding is one of them.
 - f. Bathroom use during the ride is another concern although not in safety reasons but health and sanitary. The children have limited opportunities and many children are very young. This adds to their difficulty during the ride and more so when accidents happen if they are unable to get to a restroom quick enough, which then adds another element such as teasing and harassment from the other children.
2. Another main concern is with the drop out rate from High School which is found to be connected with their elementary experience. Many teens of High School age in the community has dropped out since the elementary classes in Ke'anae School have been taken away. In the community's experience there have been a number of children who have dropped out before completion at Hāna School for a number of reasons but many of that number has been because they were tired of the drive and separation issues. Separation issues such as titles based on where they live versus living in Hāna or other outlying communities. One firmly stated that she dropped out because she was tired of the drive and that she didn't believe in the education provided at I Iāna School.
 - a. *A number of children who dropped out in the recent years since cutting the number of grades at Ke'anae School are requested and that this matter should be firmly studied. This is a great concern to all involved because it is a growing trend in the community.*
3. Health and accessibility to the children are another concern to all involved. The health of the children from the length and type of travel they are exposed to and when the children are sick in school is another concern.

- a. First, some of the children get motion sickness on the bus because of the time they travel which starts about 6:15am and the road conditions they travel in. If a child gets sick on the ride over they start their school day this way. Listed here are some of the experiences some of the families has faced:
 - i. The child can not eat breakfast due to feeling sick and as the sickness wears of they are hungry along with the after effects of being sick, such as fatigue, grouchy, or unwilling to actively participate in class.
 - ii. The child is unwilling to ride the bus because of the constant motion sickness.
 - iii. When the child arrives home homework is delayed, daily routine is obstructed, and the school experience is sullied.
 - iv. Attitudes are especially affected in result of motion sickness.
 - b. When a child is sick during school for what ever reason, parents are called and many times unable to directly pick up their child because of the drive time involved which is about one hour not including preparation or added time if they are not at home. Parents are concerned about getting to their child when they are needed.
 - c. If the bus is late in arriving at Hāna School the children are unable to have their breakfast in the morning thus creating a chain reaction and altering of their day. Children need to have breakfast to start their day and carry them through until lunch.
4. Family time is an extremely important social impact all involved with are expressive about. Listed below are main points to the impact not only the children are affected with but their families and community also.
- a. When the children arrive home at 4:00 pm they are tired from the bus ride and need to still do their homework. This may take up to a couple hours and then they only have time bathe, eat and ready for bed. Family time is limited to dinner time and bedtime and do not have the time to spend with the children as would be for healthy

familiar bonds and development. They also don't have the time to do regular chores or routines. This sometimes will lead to extremes in behavior and their role models seem to be the other, many times older children they are with during the day and travel time.

- b. The children and families are unable to participate in any afterschool programs or activities because of travel time, distance, and the late hour the children arrive home. They are also sometimes too exhausted to do anything when they get home, including their homework.
5. The children's mental health is affected by the consolidation. Listed below are some statements about the mental health of the children being forced to go to Hāna School:
- a. Due to the type of rural community with close family ties found in this area the history of the school and the experiences of the families involved are severed when one of the foundations of the community is taken away. During the recent years the community has been lacking the bond and unity the school provides. Along with the lack of unity the school can provide, the children have a feeling that they are not worthy or deserve a school.
 - b. Several statements were made that the consolidation would give the message that Ke'anae-Wailuanui community is not important enough or worthy enough for a school.
 - c. Through the children's school experience they feel they are the outcasts or they do not belong in Hāna School because of where they live. They are treated this way by other students, their peers.
 - d. The younger children are mentally over stimulated by the older children they ride to school with on the bus. Most parents feel they are over stimulated and taught inappropriate behavior for children their age which should not be tolerated.
 - e. The teens in the community get tired of traveling to Hāna for school and some think if they didn't have to travel so far when they were in elementary, the thought of a new experience (such as High School) would excite them and would attend regularly.

- f. Many of the statements above lead to the damaging of the children's self image, self confidence, and goals. The parents, community and all involved are highly concerned about this great social impact.
6. The community is socially affected by the consolidation by:
- a. One statement made by Linda Harrison, who lives in the community, comments on the lack of a school in the area, she said, "Parental involvement has been shown to be a prime motivator for students to succeed in school. If there is no school, (or a school virtually inaccessible due to distance) that parents can volunteer in, and join together in community events, then there is less parental involvement. When people bonded together in support of their local school they serve as a safety net for each other. The supported family is able to offer more stability and support for the children."
 - b. The community questions why their community is not important enough to have or deserve a school. It seems that the community is not worthy of a school even though the need is great.
 - c. One statement, "The village can not raise the child if the child is not in the community." is felt by many in the community and that they are unable to control the amount of time given to the children, to each other and to the school. The community feels that the children and their families are being forced out of their community to find better and more convenient education for their children, setting them up for a life of success rather than immense struggles. Another statement refers to the lack of opportunities for the children forces the families to make life changing decisions which would not have to be made if there were a school in the area, "If you keep taking everything away from this community, people are going to move out to areas where they have all these opportunities available. Disbanding this community leaving it a shell of itself till eventually there is nothing left."
 - d. The community will be impacted by the lack of participation many would give if there were a school in the community and thus losing this opportunity to bond and reach out to one another. The activities, programs, sports, and general community involvement of the school provides the community with a foundation and

neutral ground. The school acts as a neutral and nurturing ground, a common place for everyone to congregate for multiple uses and events. It is a place of community pride and unity which the people truly miss having because of the lack of a school in the community.

- e. The economic value of having the school in the area reflects on the fact that families need to move to provide an education for their children. The community wants to keep families here instead of them moving out just to find education for the children.
 - f. The school also provides a base for communication for the community where it would not be found elsewhere.
 - g. The school has always been thought of as a safe place in times of emergency where now it is not used and unavailable for such times.
7. Because it is such a small community and a small school, in the past the children got more attention and the student to teacher ratio was excellent. Through out the school history it has worked for the betterment of the students, helping them to achieve their learning goals and excel in the set standards.
8. The community loses the ability to instill their community's positive, family, cultural, and educational values and traditions in the children if the school were consolidated. The school would be an avenue to teach these unique values and traditions through the community's involvement.
9. The social link to the history of the school is lost with the consolidation. Most of the families have gone to Ke'anae School through the generations. In the Cultural Landscape Study, *Kalo Kanu o Ka Aina* it is stated that the present school land was a result of a land exchange between Ben Laka Peniamana, Kamalawalu Wilkins and the Territory of Hawaii. The community believes that the land was given specifically for the use of a school and would like to further research this.