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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
WEST HAWAII COMPLEX AREAS  
75-140 HUALALAI ROAD  
KAILUA-KONA, HI 96740


**MEMORANDUM**

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February 26, 2010

TO: Katherine Matayoshi, Interim Superintendent

FROM: Arthur Souza, Complex Area Superintendent 

RE: Recommendation Against Consolidation of Kohala Middle School

The Kohala Consolidation Task Force ("Task Force") was established in accordance with Chapter 8-38, Hawaii Administrative Rules Consolidation of Public Schools, to explore the feasibility of combining the Kohala public schools as both a cost saving measure and as an exploration of public school education options for the Kohala community.

The Task Force was appointed in June of 2009 by Complex Area Superintendent Art Souza. The specific areas of focus for the study were categorized into three major considerations: 1) educational quality/opportunities, 2) financial results, and 3) social and emotional impacts on students.

From June 26, 2009 thru January 2010, the Task Force engaged itself in a comprehensive and thorough study of these focus areas in an effort to determine the best course of action in meeting the myriad education needs of the children of Kohala.

The following list of eleven findings summarizes the study and form the basis of the final group recommendation on consolidation:

1. Consideration for consolidation in Kohala Complex differs from other studies and schools in that this model is one that would displace students to a school without an existing program for that level. In other consolidation studies where two elementary schools were compressed into one school, the Kohala model would take sixth to eighth grade students and disperse them to campuses (elementary and/or high school) without existing programs to meet their needs. This would result in multi-dimensional changes (programs, facilities) and negatively impact the level of opportunities for students.
2. The overall Weighted Student Formula (WSF) monetary distribution would be significantly less in a combined configuration. In an already problematic situation, consolidation would magnify the chasm that small schools experience in their ability to offer a breadth of course offerings as are available in larger urban schools. It would be necessary to limit the array of courses available in order for middle school and high school programs to exist on the same campus.

3. A separate middle school was previously separated from the existing high school in 1991 and finalized in 2001. This “split” was undertaken to ensure that a comprehensive middle school program could be implemented at the new Kohala Middle School. To go back in this now will severely compromise the integrity and implementation of a middle school model in Kohala.
4. Kohala Middle School achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status last year. It will emerge free of restructuring this year as current indicators are positive for meeting AYP this school year. It is feared that the academic and social momentum in place currently may be disrupted by consolidation during this crucial time.
5. Lack of necessary classroom space was a major finding in the study. The elementary school currently posts a negative balance for available classroom space and, although the high school would appear to have some available space, the reality is that it requires use of all its available space to provide a curriculum broad enough to address needed elective and graduation requirements.
6. In order to consolidate schools, additional funding would have to be secured to accommodate additional classroom needs. The study indicates that a minimum ten (10) additional classrooms would be needed.
7. The study also sites health and safety concerns in the form of increased worry over traffic conditions. The addition of 200 more students would increase traffic congestion in an already crowded combination high school and elementary school campus. The study group observed traffic patterns both in the morning and afternoon periods. It is estimated that an additional fifty (50) or more cars will create even more concern than exists currently.
8. During the last year a new telephone system, septic system and technology equipment was installed at the Middle school. The investment in new technology totaled well over \$400,000. Abandoning a campus that recently made this investment in improvements is a questionable choice.
9. Currently, the majority of teachers at Kohala Middle School meet the federal guidelines for Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) status. Moving to a K-8 configuration would severely compromise the school’s ability to meet HQT criteria as it would require teachers to obtain both secondary and elementary certification requirements. In addition, it is feared that model partnership programs with the adjacent Hawaii Wildlife Center will be compromised by consolidating into the High School campus.
10. An estimated two (2) dozen community members, students and teachers presented testimony outlining their severe concerns about the consequences of negative social interactions, intimidation and decrease of leadership opportunities for middle school students should consolidation to the high school occur. It was also pointed out that these very same concerns were at the root of the original effort to form a separate middle school in 1991.

11. The study group also concluded via their review of existing financial data that a consolidation effort would result in large capital costs for new construction of needed portable classrooms or the addition of a necessary permanent classroom building (the cost of a portable classroom ranges from \$350,000-\$400,000).

The critical review of data, acknowledgement of public opinion and the consideration of many hours of Task Force discussion and school visitations indicate many compelling reasons why all three Kohala schools must remain separate entities.

I have completely reviewed the very comprehensive work undertaken by the Kohala Task Force. It is my recommendation that the Kohala Consolidation Task Force study be accepted and approved and that Kohala Middle School remains in its current configuration as a separate school on the Halaula campus.

AFS:dk

Attachment: Final Kohala Task Force Consolidation Report

c: Randolph Moore, Assistant Superintendent  
Rande Golden, Kohala Task Force Chairperson (w/o attachment)