

TASK FORCE TO STUDY CONSOLIDATION OF
MAUNALOA SCHOOL

Minutes of Meeting
January 26, 2010

Task force members present

Rose Yamada, Chair
Pancho Alcon
Daniel Espaniola
Wendy Espaniola
Janice Espiritu
Karen Holt
Joe Yamamoto

Task force members absent

Billy Akutagawa
Ronald Davis
Lydia Trinidad

Department of Education staff present

Lindsay Ball, Complex Area Superintendent

Community members present (who signed in)

Elly Abafo, Perry Buchalter, Jocelyn Buchalter, Jaime-Lyn DeKneef, Janet Foster, Richard Foster, Lana Freeman, Janna LinKee-Espaniola, Lelani Kaina, John Pele, C. Kehau Pule, Christine McCutcheon, Nola Reilly, Jim Schelinski, Sue Schelinski, Roxie Sotelomew

Pre-Meeting Presentation

Before the meeting officially opened, a video presentation was shown of the Maunaloa Unity Rally held on Saturday, January 23, 2010, at the school. The event was deemed highly successful with concerned community members from around the island attending, as well as dignitaries such as Councilman Mateo, Representative Carroll, and BOE Representative Cochran. The students at the school presented a skit and individually shared "one reason that Maunaloa School should be kept open."

Call to order

Ms. Yamada called the meeting to order at 5:07 p.m.

Minutes of the meeting of November 24, 2009

Upon motion duly made, seconded, and unanimously carried, the minutes of the meeting of November 24th were approved as circulated.

Review of agenda and timetable

Ms. Yamada reviewed the agenda for the evening. She acknowledged Randy Moore's absence due to a family contingency and Ms. Trinidad's mainland travel. She also announced the necessity for Lindsay Ball to leave at 6:45 pm to catch the last flight out in order that he attend an important meeting the following morning.

Ms. Yamada reviewed the expanded consolidation process flow chart that was distributed at the last meeting, emphasizing that tonight's meeting would focus on receiving and clarifying information and data for individual members' study. She emphasized that TF members were required to conduct all discussions and deliberations at these meetings, and it appears that time is running out. Mr. Ball shared that the Hana TF report was on its way to the Superintendent and the Board. Ms. Yamada referred to the website that had copies of these reports, the latest being the Kohala Task Force Report. She indicated how rigorous and extensive these reports are. The group agreed to:

- Work in smaller groups to scan data information and record questions for clarification or for additional information (6:16 pm – 6:45 pm)
- Suggest possible dates for a March meeting in the event that the Task Force needed more time for deliberation.

Correspondence

The chair acknowledged receipt of correspondence and other information relating to the Consolidation Study. Copies were provided to TF members, including

- Tina Thompson, Executive Assistant to Council Chair Danny Mateo, email, requesting information (11/30/09)
- Kehau Pule, Impact and Solutions, 11/30/09
- Kimberly Johnston
- Essay indicating Maunaloa's plan to "keep on going" from Sue Gerary Schelinski (no date)
- Letter of Support to Keep Maunaloa Open from Perry Buchalter, 12/5/2009
- "Maunaloa Gets Hope" by Dan Murphy, Molokai Dispatch, December 9, 2009
- "To Save a School" Opinion by Sue Gerard, Molokai Dispatch, December 9, 2009
- "NOT to Consolidate, NOT to close Maunaloa Elementary School" letter from Fred D. Bicoy, December 28, 2009

Data Presentations

As planned at the last meeting and enumerated in Task Force Report guidelines, descriptive data on Maunaloa and the other schools in the consolidation study were distributed. Not all categories of information was available; however, the chair indicated the tables are subject to additional or updated data. The tables distributed included the following. Request was made for the information to be electronically sent to TF members and Randy Moore.

- State Data Tables (Enrollment History, Geographic Exceptions, Classroom and Facility Utilization, WSF Allocation 08-09) - source: R. Moore
- School Data (Current Programs & Services in lieu of State table) – source: Principals

- Performance and Demographic Information for Maunaloa, Kualapuu, and Kaunakakai (SY 07-08 and SY 08-09) – source: DOE SSIR, NCLB School Report, and Trend Report (Educational and Fiscal)
- Related Data (Molokai High, Molokai Middle, and Statewide) – source: DOE SSIR, NCLB School Report, and Trend Report (Educational and Fiscal)

In addition to the quantitative descriptive information, Ms. Yamada provided the TF members with two analytic works-in-progress:

- Qualitative Analysis: Testimonies (1/22/10)
- Questions Relating to Facilities & Services at Maunaloa School

Visitation Reports (Full report and attachments for each school were distributed.)

The chair expressed appreciation to the principals for welcoming the visitors. Also, she thanked those who attended.

Wendy Espaniola reported that eight (8) people attended the Kualapuu Site Visitation on December 4, 2009. She noted that

- The school environment was exceptional - welcoming and conducive to learning; campus was also exceptional with artwork and gardens.
- Classrooms were well equipped with technology.
- Size of office and library quite small for size of school.
- Culture established by principal was very healthy.
- Professional development opportunities for the faculty and staff are exceptional.
- Success for All, Everyday Math are some of the curriculum materials used; average class size is 1:17.5; the Hawaiian Immersion Program is located there.
- Physical Education is a core program; students spend 45 minutes per week with the PE teacher; all 5th and 6th graders participate in a biathlon (swimming and mile run) twice a year.
- In the classes we visited, there was a lot of cooperative learning; students have access to computers in the classroom.
- For 26 SPED students, there are 3 SPED teachers and 4.5 EAs.
- Students receive special attention in reading through SFA with regular teachers, corrective reading and individual tutoring.
- Special programs include a project-based technology activity that culminates in a show-case of students' projects at the end of the year.
- There is a full-time School-Family Facilitator; PSAP; besides regular communication methods, the school uses email.
- The visitation received an overall 3.5 rating.

Rochelle Borden reported that only two people (which included herself) attended the Kaunakakai visitation. However, the school had planned for and provided refreshments and materials for a much larger group.

- The school plant was given a 4.0 rating. It recently underwent major renovations.
- A 3.8 rating for school administration was given. The orientation meeting was an exceptional example of teamwork among school leaders, as they

described their roles and functions which reflected close collaboration and communication.

- Instructional programs were rated 3.5. The average class size is 1:17 across all grades. The range of class sizes is 14 – 25.
- The basic programs are Houghton Mifflin for Language Arts, Everyday Math, Harcourt-Brace Science. Social Studies is standards- and teacher-based.
- The average time spent on reading is 90 minutes per day; 60- 80 minutes per day for math.
- The average level of technological skills among teachers was estimated to be 7 (out of possible 10), with teachers working and helping each other in learning about and integrating new skills into their teaching.
- There are 43 certified SPED children; most are included in mainstream classes. There are six full-time SPED teachers and one part-time teacher. There also are 11.5 educational assistants. The special needs rating was 3.8.
- Afterschool opportunities are provided through the 21st Century Program.
- Each week is opened with a schoolwide assembly called MAMA (Monday a.m. Assembly)
- The Elementary School Attendance Program (ESAP) tracks student attendance
- A gifted/talented program is being initiated.
- For parent-community involvement, the rating was 3.5. On an average, parents are invited to school activities twice a quarter. The School PCNC, Mrs. Friel continues to be a driving force in planning, coordinating, and conducting a range of parent-community activities. These include the Room Parent and Grandparent Support Programs. The most recent was a highly successful “Christmas Through the Eyes of Children” activity.

Task Force Discussion and Deliberation

The task force members were asked to divide into two small groups with J. Yamamoto leading one and J. Espiritu leading the other. Before the groups began their work, some instructions and explanations were provided:

- Purpose is for members to look at materials received and determine needs for clarification or additional information.
- Questions to clarify the data or to get more information should be recorded so the questions could be referred to the appropriate person/office.
- Community members may join the deliberating groups, but are asked to allow for the task force members’ deliberation and questions

Questions resulting from the deliberations were reported. Rhetorical questions are not listed.

- What is the Ranch’s position?
- Where’s data on social impact?
- If charter schools are exempt from consolidation, would it be advantageous to begin working on a charter?

- Questions regarding money, WSF: If Maunaloa was allocated the same per student rate as Kaunakakai, what would the school receive? How would the school be able to organize using this smaller allocation?
- What are the actual costs at Maunaloa?

Mr. Lindsay Ball's Comments

- As mentioned before, Mr. Ball encouraged the group to collect as much information as possible and to be as inclusive as you can in the reporting.
- Also, Mr. Ball cautioned: "Remember that if you ask for actual cost, the result may be negative for Maunaloa. Small schools require significantly more to operate."

Public Testimony

- Perry Buchalter, Molokai High School teacher reiterated his points from a previous testimony. He expressed concern that the Ranch has been very quiet. At the Unity Rally for Maunaloa, there was significant support for keeping the school open. Mele Carroll is proposing a bill to exempt Maunaloa from the consolidation process. The question is, Why close a school in an area that is growing? He also noted that if charter schools are exempt from consolidation, maybe Maunaloa should move in that direction. He cited examples of possibilities for magnet centers. Mr. Buchalter encouraged the community to take the time to be more active and to engage in supportive actions such as writing to elected officials.
- Rochelle Borden, Maunaloa's SASA, opened her testimony by expressing her disappointment at the task force and clarifying that this was not meant to offend anyone. She noted that perhaps some members were not taking their responsibility seriously as evidenced by the poor showing at school visitations and at the Maunaloa Unity Rally on Saturday. Ms. Borden said that the rally was a huge success due to leaders and families of the community. Ms. Borden elaborated on the importance of the task force's responsibility; that is, the task force was charged with making a recommendation or decision which would define the future of Maunaloa and may adversely affect people's lives. She used the analogy of a parent with a child needing special services and the means that the parent would use to determine where to send the child. "What would you do?" She questioned how a decision could be made without taking advantage of opportunities to gather more information and solely on information on a piece of paper. Her plea was for task force members to take their responsibility seriously since innocent children will be affected by their decision.
- Lana Freeman, a 4th grade teacher at Maunaloa School shared what she learned in her lengthy experience teaching at Maunaloa. She stated that there are many issues at stake here. Her concern is for the children and their immediate needs. Molokai, Ms. Freeman stated, is the most unique island in Hawaii. The children at Maunaloa, in particular, are growing up in very complex upbringing situations – they face many issues. In the consolidation study, what matters most is what is best for these children. Ms. Freeman believes they deserve a chance – the smaller classrooms, the environment that fosters love and cherishes the children. She

- strongly urged the task force, “Keep our school open. Keep our community alive. Keep Molokai’s spiritual grace thriving.”
- John Pele, a community member, explained his perspective and his experience. He expressed his animosity toward the system/process, not the people. He summarized his position, “Just say – PAU – no can!”
 - Eileen Kaina, parent of three children, explained that she and her family moved to Maunaloa because of the climate and the community. She has a preschool child attending Kaunakakai School. She plans to enroll this child at Maunaloa because it is closer to home, the child need not get up and ready by 6:00 am, peers are safe and from the same neighborhood, and should there be an emergency, someone is close by. Shutting down the school would mean a failure to consider the parents, staff, post office, and mostly the children. With the Governor shutting down bus service, costs of service are rising. Everything is becoming very expensive. Ms. Kaina made a plea for the parents, “we want the best education for our children,” and stated that the school is the “rock and foundation of this community.”
 - Sue Schelinski, teacher at Maunaloa, explained that she was a teacher and teachers are passionate which is why she is making this oral testimony, in addition to the written one she submitted. Ms Schelinski reprimanded the task force for considering data that compared classes from school to school and from year to year. She stated that every educator knows that children in one year differ from those in another. She also stated that variables differ among schools. As an example, she described Kaunakakai children as coming from the heights where families have computers, iPods, etc. Whereas the children from Maunaloa are not as privileged – they come from deprived homes with family issues and are exposed to things like pakalolo, etc. Ms. Schelinski referred to the descriptive tables of current programs and services in the schools. She said that Maunaloa had fewer activities because it was farther from town. She questioned the value of a number of the activities at other schools such as afterschool computer classes/lab or golf. Ms. Schelinski emphasized that the Maunaloa child “would benefit more from being at home with their own families.” She denounced the use of data and emphasized the value of growing up in Maunaloa – “Statistics be darned.”
 - Kehau Pule, community leader, stated that she was appalled and disappointed at the massive rush to gather data. Maunaloa School is the heart of the community. Behind all this data are real people, she noted, and she is not willing to talk data. If there must be consolidation, look at Oahu where it was pointed out that there were ten schools within a small radius. Ms. Pule questioned the task force, “You folks can sleep at night if you take the heart of the community?” She stated that the people of Maunaloa are knowledgeable and can make the school run. As reflected in her written testimony, Ms. Pule recapped the uniqueness of Maunaloa. She alluded to the events at the Saturday Unity Rally and the fact that most of the task force member were absent and missed witnessing the uniqueness of the community. She summarized by stating that as a homeowner and community member, she will fight for Maunaloa School.

Comments by task force members

- Daniel Espaniola, VP at Molokai High School, is a parent and community representative on the task force. He felt it important to express his concerns relative to some of the comments and tenor of the messages to the task force in the testimonies. He indicated that he is a member of the task force but, more importantly, he is a member of the community. As such, some of the comments were offensive. Yes, the task force needs to look at data, but data aren't the most important things – the kids are. As a task force member, Mr. Espaniola stated that his duty is to stay neutral or open, and to try to see how best to keep the school open. He asked the audience how many were born and raised in Maunaloa and attended the school. He noted that only four hands went up. Mr. Espaniola expressed his feeling that some of the statements made in the testimonies appeared to indicate that as a task force member, he was not doing the best for the community and the school.
- Janice Espiritu, Principal of Kaunakakai School, disagreed with the statements that implied task force members were not concerned nor cared about Maunaloa. She pointed to the allegation that nonattendance at the rally was an indicator of this lack of concern. On the contrary, Ms. Espiritu emphasized that there were reasons for nonattendance; for example she cited the funeral she had to attend on Maui and the class that Ms. Yamada taught on Maui. Ms. Espiritu also pointed out that the data displays prepared for the task force members were not a comparisons. She stated, “If we look for the bad, there will be bad. If we look for the good, there will be good.” The data provide information and help to keep the task force focused. The task force also takes to heart what the community is saying. “That,” she said, “is important...and trying to make the best decisions.” She commended and thanked the audience members who come to the meetings, evening after evening, sharing their mana`o with the task force.
- Karen Holt, executive of the Molokai Community Service Council, clarified to the community members that the task force does not make the decision to close the school. She noted that members of the task force are volunteers, each with his or her own business/work schedules. She asked if the audience could figure out what these schedules were like because nonattendance should not be construed as lack of concern. She said, “I assure you that I am concerned.” The issue is emotional and it is understandable how not knowing or not having control can result in lashing out. Further, she continued, if the decision were to be based purely on what we want, the school would stay open for generations. However, Ms. Holt emphasized that it isn't emotions that will control the outcome – the outcome will be influenced by things like data, mathematical arguments/proposals. Emotional arguments may not necessarily make or be sufficient to make the difference. “We are not on opposite sides of the fence,” she commented. When a decision is made and if it is to shut down the school, there'll be opportunity to criticize, and, she stated, “I expect you folks to make your displeasure known. But know to whom to tell that to... .” Ms. Holt referred to the data charts, “When you look at the work put into collecting and displaying data and information, you can see how to build a case. That's what we're trying to do.” As a task force studying the situation, the DOE expects the members to

be objective. Throughout the study, Ms. Holt asked the community to support the task force as it tries to figure out how best to present the situation and the arguments to the decision makers in Honolulu.

Closing

Ms. Yamada apologized to those who saw no use for the data presented to the task force at the meeting. She challenged those in the audience who were not familiar with her work to seek the documents out and see how important data are. She concluded by emphasizing several points:

- The report must have all the important facts and arguments to stand up by itself. This report should be of highest and exceptional quality, reflective of the uniqueness of Molokai. She committed to having direct and personal interest in the writing and completion of the report.
- Deliberation by the task force will require more time. What are the possibilities? The question is not one of status quo versus consolidation – the question is what is best for the children. The deliberation certainly must go beyond “these beautiful pieces of paper.”
- The deliberation process will continue at the February meeting, and spillover as needed into March. With individual task force members’ considerations discussed and collaborative statements accepted, the crafting of a report begins – a report that fulfills the guidelines of the State, as well as highlights the study outcomes. The draft report accepted by the task force as a whole will serve as the document to be presented at a public hearing.
- The job of the task force is critical. The input of the public is as important. At the public hearing, the community will be asked to help finalize the report. Are there recommendations that need to be made? One? Two? Three? Four? If none, are we willing for someone else to make the recommendations?
- In the process of arriving at deliverables, voting is one of the methods deemed acceptable. If consensus is not attainable, voting may be used.

Date, times, and location of future task force meetings

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 16, 2010 at 5 p.m. at Maunaloa School. A meeting for March will be scheduled upon receipt of available dates from everyone.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Rose Yamada