

**Public Hearing on
Maunaloa School Consolidation Task Force Report**

May 10, 2010
Maunaloa School Cafeteria

The Public Hearing on the Maunaloa School Consolidation Task Force Report was convened by Task Force Chairperson Rose Yamada on May 10, 2010 at 6:07 p.m.

Task force members present:

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

Task force members absent

Billy Akutagawa
Ronald Davis

Chairperson Rose Yamada gave introductory remarks.

The following oral testimonies were presented.

1. Walter Ritte.

He said: (i) small is beautiful (he is a teacher at a school with six students) and (ii) the true cost of closing the school should be considered. He showed a 3-minute May Day program video prepared by one of his students, an alumna of Maunaloa School, to capture the essence of Maunaloa School. He hopes the Board of Education could see this video. School administrators and parents, and parents say the school is a special school that is the heart of the community.

2. Eileen Kaina.

She has lived in Maunaloa since 1995. She has three children, ages 4, 3, and 2. The eldest goes to preschool in Kaunakakai but will go to Maunaloa next year because it's closer to home, won't have to get up early in the morning, will be close to home if there is an emergency. Will the DOE provide bus transportation if Maunaloa School is closed? At a rally to keep the school open, students said the school should be kept open because it would break their hearts to close the school. They love the school and love the teachers. She cannot afford to homeschool her children. Children feel safe at Maunaloa. Children will grow up to be illiterate if Maunaloa School is closed. We want the best for our children. There is no real benefit to closing Maunaloa School. It is the rock and foundation of the community. If the school is closed, the community will become nothing – a ghost town. “Another school would not be considered our home. Why aren't the decision-makers here to hear our testimonies?”

3. Ken Nakayama.

He is a parent who lives in Kaunakakai with two adopted children, aged 9 and 10, with learning disabilities from Maui attending Maunaloa School. He sends them to Maunaloa because he thinks they will socialize better and be taken care of, enabling them to overcome their background. In two years they have shown great improvement and have great relationships with their teachers. The teachers love the children and really know them because the school has small classes. The teachers work with his children individually. The children know everyone in the school. The children attend an after-school program where they can do their homework with people who help and care. "Please keep Maunaloa School open."

4. Haliaka Lima English.

She is a 2nd grader at Maunaloa School. She loves the school. She works hard because her teachers help her. The teachers are the best. They teach her to study hard and do her best. "Please do not close our school."

5. Judy Caparida.

Our children are important. The DOE should do studies of schools that are close together and not full, before they look at closing Maunaloa. Take away the school and Maunaloa is a dead community. Children get affected by everything adults do. Adults need to speak up on the children's behalf. "The consolidation task force report is not life – it's not breathing. Nothing is pono. We need to take care of our children."

6. Diana Lima English.

She is the mother of Haliaka. Her daughter has progressed academically because the class size is small. Her teachers make her feel comfortable. There is after-school help for homework. She was at a different school with larger classes, and didn't do well. She has twin boys whom she drives every day go to preschool in Kaunakakai. Stop thinking with your wallets and start thinking with your hearts. "Don't take Maunaloa School away from our students."

7. Byron Espaniola.

This is happening on Gov. Lingle's watch. This is community abandonment. She was here as a young person. Molokai supported her as a councilmember, then mayor, then governor. Maunaloa has a way of hanai-ing children, not abandoning them. Molokai adopts children, not aborts them. Gov. Lingle is outside the community but she can still embrace the school.

8. Raymond Hiro.

He went to Maunaloa School. He is a member of the SCC. It's hard to hear that it could be closed. The task force report has lots of numbers, but what's important is the children. It's very hurtful that Molokai Ranch shut down the town. He has ties to most of the task force members. He's here to stop the consolidation.

9. Bob Underwood.

He has lived in Maunaloa three years and is a teacher at Kaunakakai School, on the SCC there and president of the HSTA for Molokai. He has been to every task force meeting. He's happy to hear testimony tonight from many parents. Thank you to the task force for

your hard work. If the school is closed, it won't be because of the task force. We (community) should begin contacting the Board of Education members to let them know how we feel. He was at the Kilohana School bazaar on Saturday. He knows the Kilohana students have a very different perspective on the world as those at other schools on Molokai; closing Maunaloa School would cause the unique perception of the children at Maunaloa to be lost. He will send more detailed testimony to Mr. Ball and the BOE. "Please don't close the school."

10. Sue Schelinski.

Thank you, task force members, for a fine report. A couple of comments: (i) moving the complex staff to Maunaloa would cause more travel cost; (ii) moving the middle school to Maunaloa would mean too much time on the bus for this age of students; (iii) adding a preschool will not cost the estimated \$83,000 (a preschool would be very desirable); (iv) adult education classes are a good suggestion (she would attend them if they were available); (v) the school land will revert to the landowner, if it is closed it must be reopened when the community grows; (vi) she hasn't seen anything negative about Maunaloa School, so why close it? She has felt nothing but aloha at Maunaloa School. "Keep it here!"

11. Rochelle Borden.

"Thank you, task force members, for your time and commitment." Since October she has been collecting data, including the list of schools for which consolidation will be studied. Oahu has several districts with two or more schools on the same street: the three Enchanted Lake schools; Aiea, Pearlridge, Scott, and Waimalu; Aliamanu and Makalapa; Hahaione, Kamiloiki, and Koko Head; Kalihi Valley schools; other schools not on the same street, but close and not operating at capacity. Maunaloa School has been in the community for 70 years. Students love their little school, their teachers, and other adults on campus. Students have come to Maunaloa because they were teased at other schools because of their size, skin color, or where they live. Students at Maunaloa are taught to be respectful of each other. The ultimate decision about Maunaloa will be made by people who have never been here. All they think about is the numbers and how they can save money, not about spending quality time with your family, living off the land. Maunaloa School has been her home for the past nine years and wants it to be for the next 25 years as well. "Please help keep our lovely school open."

12. Deanna Keliioomalulu.

She is a parent of a Maunaloa student. Her children are doing very well in their classes. They are shy children; if they have to go to another school, they will have to start all over again. "Please keep the school open."

13. Catherine Brind.

In 2002 she moved from Honolulu to Molokai. Her dad is from Molokai. The school was the main reason for coming to Maunaloa. She has a 3rd grade son and a pre-school daughter. The school has been perfect for him; he wouldn't be where he is if he were at another school. The children pray every night; they pray for the teachers, that they could keep their jobs at Maunaloa. "If you get rid of the school, what will happen to the community? Please keep the school open."

14. Shawn (Mahi) English.

He's the father of Haliaka. When his daughter first came to this school, the first day of school when she came home she had a smile on her face. Everyone is here tonight because they believe in this school. He doesn't want this school to close. One of his twin sons, now at a preschool in Kaunakakai, asked if they could go to Maunaloa. He promised him he could go to Maunaloa School. So don't make him break his promise.

15. Roxie Sotelo Mello.

Her husband is from Molokai. Their children were born on the mainland. They first went to school in Ewa. The class was large; the teachers didn't push her daughter. She was so far behind. Now, after three years in Maunaloa, she has caught up. Her son thrives at this school. For May Day he had to write an essay to be in the May Day court. If it weren't for this school, he'd probably fade into the background. Some parents are sending their children to school elsewhere because they think Maunaloa School will be closed. "So please fight for our school, for our children."

16. Malia and Kristine Grik.

Malia, kindergarten student: "Please keep it open, don't shut it down."

Kristine, mother: the school has taught her daughter to read. When she has a question, she just walks up the hill. She doesn't want to put her daughter on the bus to ride 20 miles. Not having a car, she would not be able to go to the other school.

17. Ruth Manu.

Why break up the school? The children are having attention, and love. These are our children, our school. Molokai is a special island. People can come together. The community must be in unity. Unity works. Prayers work better. The community must come together and stand up for Maunaloa School and our children. Being pono is very important.

18. Sam Kapuni.

He went to Maunaloa School, then went to live in Keawanui and Pelekunu for six years. He got his G.E.D. when he was 15 years old. He knows how important education is. Families are suffering because of the economy. Two of his children attend Maunaloa School. The teachers at Maunaloa School come to his house to talk. His children asked him to come tonight because "they like close down our school." He wants to open a restaurant and Hawaiian cooking school in Maunaloa. He made 100 laulus tonight to give to people who need food.

Lindsay Ball thanked everyone for coming tonight. He reminded everyone that the ultimate decision is made by the Board of Education. Board members need to know and feel what everyone in the room feels about the school.

Rose Yamada thanked the audience for attending the hearing. She provided information on where to submit written testimony and said the Task Force would have its final decision-making meeting on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at Maunaloa School in the cafeteria at 5 p.m.

The public hearing was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.