



Keiki Focus

News

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Before Budget Cuts: Early Learning Council's First Meeting



Hawai`i's new Early Learning Council (ELC) convened on September 17, 2008. The high level of commitment to the ELC's success and the importance of the work ahead was evidenced through the attendance of members such as David McClain, President of the University of Hawai`i system, Dee Jay Mailer, CEO of Kamehameha Schools, and Lillian Koller, Director of the Department of Human Services.

This beginning meeting focused primarily on organizational discussions necessary to prepare for upcoming work. The ELC selected Dr. Robert Peters of the Hawai`i Association of Independent Schools (also Headmaster at Hanahau`oli School) as the ELC Chair, and Dee Jay Mailer as ELC Vice-Chair. Dr. Peters served as Co-Chair of the Act 259 Early Learning Educational Task Force, and Ms. Mailer was Chair of the Interdepartmental Resources Work Group of the Task Force.

During the meeting, Deputy Attorney General Randall Nishiyama covered key mandates of Act 14 (http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/session2008/bills/SB2878_CD1_.htm), which established the ELC. Mr. Nishiyama pointed out that ELC representatives are free to designate their own alternates if they are unable to attend meetings in person. The regular attendance of key decision-makers will likely play a significant role in how effectively the ELC is able to move forward.

It was encouraging to see many leaders from our community in attendance. ELC meetings are open to the public and we hope those who are interested will attend. The ELC decided that they would convene their next meeting on Oct 13, 1:30-4:30pm, with the location TBD; contact the Hawai`i State Attorney General's office for official dates, times and locations. We look forward to the programs and policies the ELC will establish in the future.

Early Learning Budget Cut

In light of the State and Department of Education (DOE) budget cuts announced last week, the ELC may now be faced with even greater

challenges -- possibly defining their function and actions without the intended staff and financial support which was cut from the DOE budget by the state's Department of Budget and Finance.

"Included in...mandatory cuts was \$1 million appropriated for early childhood education and the state's newly formed Early Learning Council, approved by lawmakers last session in order to begin developing a state-wide preschool system.

Daniel Hamada, assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction and student support, said he was disappointed that those funds were cut from DOE's budget. "The point was to develop the preschool system. Now it's in the air," Hamada said. He said the cut doesn't mean that the council will be disbanded, but it does mean that it won't have administrative staff, supplies and coordinators."

Honolulu Advertiser, September 22, 2008

Hawai`i's action in passing Act 14, and thereby creating the ELC, is being watched with great interest by many locally and across the country. Although the forward movement of the council is complicated by these challenging economic times, the potential for great progress remains. As a state we have a long way to go to help all children in Hawai`i get to the point at which they are as safe, healthy and ready to succeed in school as possible. The ELC must play a significant role in helping us reach our goal.

On September 24, Superintendent Patricia Hamamoto spoke to schools and the community via a live broadcast regarding the proposed budget cuts to Hawai`i public schools for fiscal biennium 2009-2011. A draft proposal of the DOE Budget Reductions is posted on the DOE website at <http://www.doe.k12.hi.us> This proposal includes the Early Education Council budget cut of \$250,000 and 3 positions cut, identified by the Department of Budget and Finance.

Superintendent Hamamoto will review all of the public input on the draft proposal and submit Budget Reduction recommendations to the Hawai`i State Board of Education on Thursday, October 2, 2008. The recommendations will be available for public viewing on the DOE website that day. We hope to learn more about this cut and its impact at the next ELC meeting, tentatively scheduled for October 13, 2008.

Good Beginnings Alliance is a nonprofit organization working in partnership with families, communities, policy makers, early childhood providers and advocates to shape community will and public policy, mobilize action and maximize resources for Hawai`i's children. Good Beginnings Alliance is a member of [Voices for America's Children](#)

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