

**STATE OF HAWAI‘I
OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS
Kanu ‘O Ka ‘Āina - New Century Public Charter School
64-1043 Hi‘iaka Street
Kamuela, HI. 96743**

**Hawai‘i Island Site Visit Summary
of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs
Board of Trustees
Summary Report
Septemeber 14, 2023 – 10:00 am**

ATTENDANCE:

Trustee Hulu Lindsey
Trustee Kalei Akaka
Trustee Keli‘i Akina
Trustee Luana Alapa
Trustee Dan Ahuna
Trustee Keoni Souza
Trustee Mililani Trask
Trustee Brickwood Galuteria

BOT STAFF:

Lehua Itokazu, Board Secretary
Kanani Iaea, Trustee Aide
Amber Kalua, Trustee Aide
Richelle Kim, Trustee Aide
Crayn Akina, Trustee Aide
Ruben Sierra, Trustee Aide
Lei-Ann Durant, Trustee Aide
Kahelelani Keawekane, Trustee Aide
Nathan Takeuchi, Trustee Aide
Anuheia Diamond, Trustee Aide

ADMINISTRATION:

Colin Kippen, Interim CEO
Casey Brown, COO
Alice Silbanuz, Director of Communications
Ilima Kela, BSA

GUEST:

Taffi Wise
Michael Nakasato
Chad Schimmelfenning
Calvin Hoe
Charlene Hoe
Mapuana Waipa
Louis Liam
Kaleihōkū Kala‘i-Aguiar
Denise Espania
Janice English
Hedy Sullivan
Steven Sullivan
Keomailani Case
Kanoa Castro
Trevor Atkins

I. Call to Order

Site visit starts at 10:00 a.m.

II. Site Visit

Kanu ‘O Ka ‘Āina - New Century Public Charter School

Everyone meets for protocol at the piko of the school. Trustees participate in the morning session with the haumāna. It is shared about the wind everyone is feeling and how it connects with the people of Waimea. The school is a cultural-based charter school system. They offer indoor and outdoor learning spaces for the students. Some of the teachings they offer is the hula, agriculture, farming – growing various plants and husbandry – teaching haumāna how to raise animals and how to properly kill and clean them. There is a large makahiki field, a greenhouse, and outdoor classroom.

One of the things that students spoke on was knowing their pilina to this space and with each other. They focus on having frequent group activities where older students pair up with younger students and mentor them with classwork, different activities, working in the māla, or in the after school care program. Project-based learning has changed how most of these students learn. The school prides themselves on this method. The older students have yearlong individual projects that must relate to their culture, community, and school. These projects help them find solutions for their communities. After a quick overview of the school by students, the Trustees moved inside to meet with the various Charter school leaders.

Tafi Wise, Kanu ‘O Ka ‘Āina Shares a brief background on the Charter School movement. They have been operating for about 25 years. They are culturally connected and united with one another because they have to constantly fundraise. They are proud of their haumāna, the path they have taken, and of all their schools. She shares that the vehicle they use for the charter schools is not ideal. They have been in talks for a long time about switching Charter authorizers. Their goal is to talk story with OHA to see how this could happen. They looked over OHA’s strategic goals and have spoken to other Charter School leaders, they are looking at the year 2030 as a timeline that they want to say they are ready now. She shares that the sector is not welcoming of them. They do not believe in their ideology, epistemology, and they do not treat the children or the staff equitable on many instances; such as food and transportation. If they are lucky, during a normal year, they get about .30-.40 cents on the dollar if you include all the provisions that you need to educate a child.

They have applied to be an authorizer. It is the State entity that gives the schools the contract to serve their communities. They do get a per pupil allocation and a lot of strings that come with that. Many of them realize that what they thought the deal would be is not the deal. She shares they have a lot of ‘ike and that nobody can ask better questions to decipher questions of the bureaucracy of what a sovereign system looks like. Every mechanism needed to move forward is leo-based. She shares the laws are in place, the administration rules are in place, and the application is in place.

In closing, she shares the point of everyone coming together was to have OHA get to know them, what they stand for, and what the money is funding. Although there are seventeen different schools on different islands, they recognize each other as a school system, and they all share the same values. Their hope is that OHA will join them in a feasibility study. They believe there is no one in the State and Country that knows the culturally-based education system better than their po‘o kula or them.

Trustee Ahuna asks who would be doing the feasibility study? Taffy explains she is not sure yet but has some ideas. She also shares that the criteria would be a good relationship with the community and an understanding of the Federal and the State sides. She also gives an example of last year, \$451 million was given to all public schools for one school year and only 27% of the money was distributed. The rest of the money is tied up in bureaucracy. She thinks if everyone works together, there has to be a way that they can access that monies instead of them constantly asking for trust money. She estimates that last year they got approximately

\$400/student when they should've gotten \$7000/student.

Trustee Akaka asks if there can be an explanation of what an authorizer is. Taffi explains that when looking at the structure this is what you have, The Charter School Authorizer on one side, the Board of Education in the middle, and DOE on the other side. The Charter schools are all on contracts for public dollars and they are paid per child. The contract is the key to the deal and is supposed to clarify the uniqueness of each community for the public dollar, it is the key for the public charter picture. In Hawai'i, they do not have good representation. They do follow best practice, but they do not follow the law, and the Attorney General said it was a bad contract and that they should not sign it and that the commission was the only authorizer to authorize and deseminat contracts by June 30th or you get nothing per pupil and you are not a school. She shares that there is a national best practice by National Association of Charter Schools Authorizers (NACSA) who has studied Hawai'i at length, and said that each authorizer should have about twelve schools. In Hawai'i, there is one authorizer for 37 schools and they have denied several applications. She explains that the Board of Education can authorize a new authorizer but the commission is set as the default by State law so they have not allowed anyone to become another authorizer. In 2019, they applied to be an authorizer for Native Hawaiian Focus Charter School and they were approved with the exception that they did not have enough money to support it. After Kanu O 'Aina was built, they started a Community Development Financial Institution which Uncle Peter Hanohano use to run. They submitted an application with a subsidiary model. It was denied for three reasons:

- 1) Money. They wanted five years of capital for a five year contract in hand;
- 2) Standards. In their application, the cultural values which are in alignment with Article 10 of Hawai'i's Constitution trumped the Board of Education's standards. This is what they felt. They stated in the comments we received that they needed to honor 302D, the law that governs us. She shares that they forgot to look at the Constitution; And
- 3) The refusal to shut the school down because they didn't meet the State's requirements. They wanted to meet with each community and find out what the problems were, do a different metric of data evaluation that was more in alignment with them. The good news is that the plan is still alive and they could submit it tomorrow or take it to the legislature.

There are currently eighteen people working in the charter commission. They are the largest in the Nation. The authorizer looks over all thirty-seven charter schools. If they want to do this by the next contract renewal, they need to have a plan in three years. The feasibility study will help them articulate the model that's appropriate for authorized Hawaiian-focused charter schools or for an additional authorizer. They share they have a limited amount of time before it will turn into another six years before they can have this conversation again. Currently, there is no appetite to authorize an additional school even with the situation in Lāhainā.

Trustee Trask explains that they are short on time and it will need to be placed on an agenda. She states there is a significant threat to funding now that it is coming from the Supreme Court. A white woman wanted to know why indigenous and minorities have this? She won, then she went to the Supreme Court and won there. The Supreme's recent ruling for programs that provide funding to those who were previously in the last 50 years defined as being disadvantage is now suspect. The time for affirmative action has now passed. The new standard is you cannot come in with general statistics. She encourages the Trustees to read the memo from Colin explaining the cases.

In closing, Chair Hulu makes a commitment to propose a discussion on \$100K to the Resource Management Committee for consideration.

III. Public Testimony

None

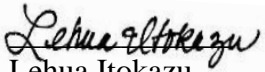
IV. Announcements

None

V. Adjournment

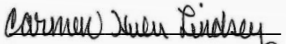
The site visit ends.

Respectfully submitted,



Lehua Itokazu
Board Secretary

Site Visit Summary Approved at Board of Trustees Meeting on May 9, 2024



Carmen Hulu Lindsey
Chairperson, Board of Trustees