

To: Board of Education, Chair Roy Takumi, Vice Chair Bill Arakaki, Honored Members

From: Deborah Bond-Upson for Parents for Public Schools of Hawai'i and HE'E Coalition

Date: May 15, 2025

Re: Board of Education, General Business Meeting, Agenda Items

We appreciate the commitment to Career and College Readiness of the DOE, P-20, Castle Foundation and other community organizations. We would like to know what specific efforts can now be taken to address the shortfall in math achievement, ACT performance, and attendance which threaten the success of these efforts. What community mentorship, family engagement, tutoring, and other interventions can address the continuing problems and the growing gap of affluent and economically challenged students.

Notes from AI research:

Hawaii's Performance in Career and College Readiness Compared to Other States

Hawaii has made notable progress in career education and readiness, particularly through expanding Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathways and increasing the proportion of students earning honors diplomas. **However, the state faces persistent challenges in academic readiness-especially in mathematics-and continues to lag behind national averages in some key college and career readiness indicators.**

- Graduation and Honors Rates:
For the class of 2024, Hawaii's on-time graduation rate was 86%, matching the previous year's record. The proportion of students earning honors diplomas reached 34%, the highest in five years. Notably, 22% of graduates received CTE honors, up from 15% in 2020^[1].
- CTE Completion:
Hawaii has seen significant gains in CTE program completion. In 2019, 56% of high school students completed a CTE concentration, surpassing the state's 2020 target of 50%. This was a substantial increase from 38% in 2016^[2]. These improvements reflect a statewide push to align high school studies with workforce needs.
- ACT College Readiness Benchmarks:
Hawaii's performance on the ACT college readiness benchmarks has declined recently. In 2024, only 36% of students met the English benchmark (down from 41% in 2022), and just 16% met the mathematics benchmark^[1]. For context, in 2016, 53% of ACT-tested Hawaii graduates were considered to be making progress toward at least a gold ACT National Career Readiness Certificate, compared to 68% nationally^[3]. This suggests Hawaii lags behind the national average in college and career readiness as measured by ACT scores.

- **Career Pathways and Workforce Alignment:**
Hawaii's leading CTE pathways include hospitality, tourism, recreation, cultural arts, media, entertainment, and health services-all sectors integral to the local economy^[1]. The state's education and workforce initiatives, such as the "Hawai'i Graduates for Hawai'i's Future" campaign, aim to better align educational outcomes with projected job demands^[4].
- **Projected Workforce Needs:**
By 2031, 70% of job openings in Hawaii are expected to require education or training beyond high school, placing Hawaii among the top 20 states for the share of jobs demanding postsecondary preparation^[4].

Hawai'i Career and College Readiness Comparison to National Landscape

- **CTE Participation:**
Nationally, over 80% of high school graduates completed at least one career-education course in 2019, but only about 42% of CTE participants became "CTE concentrators" (students who complete a focused sequence of CTE courses)^{[5][6]}. **Hawaii's 56% CTE concentration rate in 2019 was well above this national average^{[2][6]}.**
- **Readiness Indicators:**
States vary widely in how they define and measure college and career readiness, with some reporting as few as 18% of students as "ready" and others as high as 89%^[7]. **Hawaii's rates for honors diplomas and CTE completion are competitive, but its ACT scores and academic readiness lag behind national averages^{[1][3]}.**
- **Equity and Outcomes:**
Like many states, Hawaii faces disparities in readiness and postsecondary enrollment among different student groups, though detailed disaggregated data for Hawaii was not provided in the search results^[7].

Strengths and Challenges

Strengths:

- Strong growth in CTE completion and honors diplomas
- CTE pathways aligned with local economic needs
- Statewide strategic initiatives to connect education with workforce demands

Challenges:

- Academic readiness, especially in mathematics, remains a concern

- ACT college readiness scores below national averages
- Ongoing need to improve the quality and consistency of career advising and academic planning

Summary Table: Hawaii vs. National Averages

Indicator	Hawaii (Recent Data)	National Average/Trend
On-time graduation rate	86%	90% for CTE concentrators ^[6]
CTE concentrator completion rate	56% (2019)	42% (2020) ^[6]
ACT English readiness (2024)	36%	Not specified, but higher ^{[1][3]}
ACT Math readiness (2024)	16%	Not specified, but higher ^{[1][3]}
Progress toward ACT NCRC (2016)	53%	68% ^[3]
Jobs requiring postsecondary (2031 projection)	70%	69%+ in 20 states ^[4]

Hawaii is making meaningful progress in career education, with CTE completion rates above the national average and a strong focus on aligning education with workforce needs. However, the state continues to face challenges in academic readiness, particularly in mathematics and college entrance exam performance, and still trails the national average in several key readiness metrics. Ongoing efforts to strengthen academic foundations and expand work-based learning opportunities will be crucial for Hawaii to further improve its standing relative to other states^{[1][2][3][4]}.

1. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/hawaii-college-career-readiness-indicators-160600762.html>
2. <https://www.civilbeat.org/2019/10/hawaii-schools-are-making-progress-in-career-and-technical-education/>
3. https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/state12_Hawaii_Web_Secured.pdf
4. <https://www.hawaiiip20.org/job-demand-for-college-degree-growing-in-hawaii-report-finds/>
5. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/the-state-of-career-and-technical-education-in-charts/2024/06>
6. <https://ctepolicywatch.acteonline.org/2022/05/the-landscape-of-career-readiness-in-the-united-states-a-state-level-analysis.html>
7. <https://www.ncan.org/news/634597/New-Report-Shows-States-are-Undermeasuring-College-and-Career-Readiness-How-to-Fix.htm>