



State of Hawai'i
Department of Education

Annual Report on Teacher Education Coordinating Committee

November 2025

Section 304A-1202, Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS), requires the Hawai'i State Department of Education and the University of Hawai'i's College of Education to report annually on the Teacher Education Coordinating Committee's activities and legislative recommendations regarding the development of teacher training programs at institutions of higher learning in Hawai'i and to improve education in Hawai'i.



Teacher Education Coordinating Committee

2024-2025 Annual Report

Executive Summary

The Teacher Education Coordinating Committee (TECC) conducted nine meetings during the 2024-2025 academic year, addressing critical issues in teacher preparation, licensure, and workforce development in Hawai'i. These monthly meetings provided a forum for the Hawai'i State Department of Education (Department), Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB), and Educator Program Providers (EPP) to share updates on priorities, discuss new developments, and collaborate on solutions to challenges related to teacher education, recruitment, and retention.

The year was marked by achievements in strategic planning initiatives, responses to program closures, and strengthening partnerships between education stakeholders. Most notably, the committee witnessed a continued improvement in teacher hiring, with unfilled positions decreasing from over 1,000 to fewer than 100 by the end of the hiring season.

Committee Overview

The TECC was established in 1965 under Section 304A-1202 of the Hawai'i Revised Statutes as an advisory committee charged with identifying, studying, and making recommendations on matters of education of common interest to the Department and EPPs in Hawai'i. This annual report is submitted to the Hawai'i State Legislature in compliance with statutory reporting requirements.

The committee's membership structure reflects its collaborative mission, bringing together the Superintendent of the Department and the Dean of the College of Education at the University of Hawai'i (UH) Mānoa, who serve in alternating years as chairperson. For the 2024-2025 academic year, the Department's Superintendent, Keith T. Hayashi, served as Chair, with UHM College of Education Dean Nathan Murata as Co-Chair. The membership also includes representatives from HTSB and each state-approved EPPs, creating a comprehensive network of stakeholders.

The participating EPPs represent the full spectrum of teacher preparation in Hawai'i, including traditional university programs at UH campuses (Mānoa, Hilo, and West O'ahu), private institutions (Brigham Young University-Hawai'i, Chaminade University, and Hawai'i Pacific University), alternative certification providers (iteach Hawai'i, Teach Away, and Teach for America), Leeward Community College, and specialized programs focusing on indigenous education (Kaho'iwai and Kahuawaiola Indigenous Teacher Education). Additional invited non-member participants include the Hawai'i State Teachers Association

(HSTA), Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education, and other educational organizations that contribute to the state's teacher preparation ecosystem.

Major Initiatives and Achievements

Strategic Planning Process

The committee continued to work on its five-year strategic plan, dedicating substantial time and resources this school year to updating this roadmap for Hawai'i's teacher education future. The plan centers on three interconnected objectives: building capacity within teacher preparation programs, increasing satisfaction among in-service teachers, and providing competitive compensation and incentives to attract and retain quality educators.

The TECC held collaborative in-person sessions at LCC in February 2025, where participants engaged in intensive discussions about current challenges and future opportunities. This was followed by focused online breakout sessions in April 2025, where working groups developed detailed objectives and measurable outcomes. The process culminated in May 2025, with the integration of stakeholder feedback and the establishment of new, modified, or deleted action steps with specific timelines.

Teacher Apprenticeship Program

This groundbreaking effort represents a paradigm shift in how the state approaches teacher preparation, offering an alternative pathway that combines work-based learning with academic study. The program secured \$4.62 million in State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula grant funding, demonstrating strong federal confidence in Hawai'i's innovative approach to addressing teacher shortages.

The development process required extensive collaboration and consultation between multiple stakeholders, such as the Department, the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, HTSB, Hawai'i Government Employees Association, and HSTA labor unions. While this process created some delays, it ensured that all stakeholders had input into the program's structure and implementation.

Currently, the program intends to use the UH system to serve as the primary training provider, with a special emphasis placed on developing pathways for Hawaiian language immersion education. To build momentum and test concepts, HTSB launched "pre-apprenticeship initiatives" such as Educator's Rising, in collaboration with select high schools, creating early exposure to teaching careers for students.

Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board

Strengthening Teacher Preparation Standards

HTSB implemented several significant policy changes designed to elevate the quality of teacher preparation across the state. New student teaching requirements now mandate a minimum of 225 hours of field experience at each grade level for candidates seeking K-12 or P-12 licenses. This change ensures that new teachers have substantial classroom

experience across the age ranges they will serve, better preparing them for the realities of multi-grade teaching assignments.

The HTSB established new credentialing requirements for cooperating teachers, ensuring that student teachers receive supervision from properly qualified professionals. This change reflects the growing recognition that the quality of field experiences significantly impacts new teacher effectiveness and retention.

The HTSB also strengthened supervision requirements, mandating that student teachers work with properly licensed educators in their specific content areas. Special education (SPED) candidates must now be supervised exclusively by certified SPED teachers, ensuring that these specialists receive targeted mentorship from experienced practitioners in their field.

Finally, recognizing evolving educational needs, HTSB expanded several licensure areas to better serve Hawai'i's diverse student population. School counseling and school psychology licenses were both expanded to cover preschool through 12th grade, acknowledging the critical importance of mental health and guidance services for younger students. The HTSB also adopted new specialty tests for SPED, social studies, and early childhood education, ensuring that certification assessments align with current best practices and state standards.

Evolution of the Career and Technical Education Program

The Department expanded Career and Technical (CTE) pathways from six to 13. For example, the broad "Public and Human Services" license category was divided into separate strands for education, hospitality and tourism, and law and public safety, reflecting the specific knowledge and skills needed in each area. In response, HTSB began efforts to better align teacher preparation with the actual CTE programs provided in Hawai'i's schools. This change affected EPPs such as LCC's programs; however, HTSB committed to being flexible, as current teachers will gradually transition to the new system during their license renewal periods rather than facing immediate compliance requirements.

Hawai'i State Department of Education

Unprecedented Hiring Success

The 2025-2026 hiring season delivered outstanding results that surpassed all expectations. After processing over 11,000 teacher applications, the Department successfully filled nearly all teaching positions, leaving fewer than 100 vacant statewide. This marks a significant improvement from the usual 1,000+ unfilled positions that have challenged the state in recent years.

The success demonstrates strong interest across all geographic regions, with the Leeward district receiving over 2,500 applications and the Hawai'i district attracting more than 2,000 candidates. Even traditionally hard-to-staff areas like Kaua'i received over 500

applications, demonstrating that the shift to position-based recruiting using the NEOED system, an online hiring platform, has significantly enhanced recruitment efforts.

Teacher career fairs attracted 307 schools, but only 45 candidates attended, suggesting that alternative recruitment strategies may be needed.

Streamlined Processes and Enhanced Requirements

The Department implemented several process improvements designed to ensure that new teachers can begin their assignments promptly and safely. Standardizing start dates to July 29th for all new employees provides predictability for both teachers and school administrators. Enhanced pre-boarding requirements, including completion of background checks and HTSB licensing by July 20th, ensure that new teachers are fully prepared for their responsibilities.

The implementation of Harm to Student Registry checks represents a significant addition to hiring safeguards, reflecting the state's commitment to student safety. This new requirement, established through Act 156, Session Laws of Hawai'i 2024, adds an important layer of protection beyond traditional background checks.

The Department also started exploring nationwide fingerprinting options for mainland candidates, recognizing that Hawai'i's geographic isolation poses unique challenges for prospective teachers relocating from the continental United States. The pilot program aims to simplify the hiring process while keeping security standards intact.

Educator Program Providers Activities

Quality Assurance and Accreditation Support

EPPs navigated a complex accreditation landscape with support from HTSB and external organizations. The Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation consultation services became available to help programs strengthen their data collection and analysis capabilities, with standardized packages offered at approximately \$2,000 per institution. These services focus on critical areas such as data quality improvement, accreditation mapping, and data visualization to help programs demonstrate their effectiveness.

Programs successfully completed their annual reporting requirements and teacher candidate audits, maintaining compliance with both state and federal requirements. Title II reporting deadlines were met across all participating institutions, demonstrating the collaborative relationship between programs and regulatory bodies.

Responding to Federal Policy Changes

The changing federal landscape created both challenges and opportunities for educator preparation programs. While some campus programs outside the College of Education received stop-work orders related to federal executive orders, teacher preparation programs remained largely unaffected.

The UH's ability to maintain a strong funding base provided an important buffer against federal policy uncertainties.

Teach Away Program Closure

The committee demonstrated a collaborative spirit when faced with the unexpected closure of the Teach Away alternative certification program in December 2024. This Canada-based company's departure left approximately 50 teacher candidates in limbo, with 24 students particularly vulnerable as they were unable to complete their certification requirements.

Rather than allowing these aspiring teachers to fail, TECC members mobilized quickly to develop alternative solutions. EPPs across the state reviewed the progress of affected students and explored Option B application processes that would allow candidates to complete their certification. Through these coordinated efforts, 20 students were able to complete their certification by June 2025. The closure highlighted the need for stronger oversight of out-of-state preparation programs and led to discussions about enhanced safeguards for future partnerships.

Special Programs and Initiatives

Comprehensive Literacy Initiative

Hawai'i secured a significant federal investment in literacy education through a \$60 million U.S. Department of Education grant covering the 2024-2029 period. This comprehensive initiative focuses on evidence-based practices from birth through grade 12, recognizing that effective literacy instruction requires coordinated efforts across all educational levels. The program includes the formation of an EPP-Department working group that brings together diverse representation from teacher preparation programs for monthly virtual meetings focused on improving literacy outcomes statewide.

Community Engagement Through Sports

The Friday Night Prime Time Program exemplifies innovative approaches to inclusive education and community building. This inclusive basketball program involves 16 high schools across O'ahu, providing competitive interscholastic opportunities that differ meaningfully from Special Olympics programming. The program's growth and television coverage demonstrate strong community support while creating positive visibility for inclusive education practices.

Professional Development and Innovation

The committee supported ongoing professional development through presentations on emerging educational technologies. The UH Library and Information Sciences provided training on generative AI and the SIFT (i.e., Stop; Investigate the Source; Find Better Coverage; and Trace Claims, Quotes, and Media to their Original Context) method for evaluating online content, helping educators navigate rapidly evolving digital landscapes. These sessions provided practical resources, including access to Stanford's Cardinal

Research Administration Foundational Training, or CRAFT, curriculum and Civic Online Reasoning materials.

Challenges and Future Directions

Strengthening Program Oversight

The closure of the Teach Away program highlighted potential gaps in oversight of out-of-state teacher preparation programs. The lack of physical presence requirements and limited safeguards when programs close unexpectedly created vulnerabilities that affected dozens of teacher candidates. HTSB is considering developing enhanced monitoring protocols and regulatory frameworks to prevent similar situations in the future.

The committee also addressed ongoing concerns about varying accreditation standards across different accrediting bodies, with some states moving away from national accreditation toward state-controlled compliance systems. These trends require careful monitoring to ensure that Hawai'i maintains high standards while providing flexibility for innovative program approaches.

Looking Forward: 2025-2026 Priorities

Strategic Plan Implementation

The comprehensive five-year strategic plan continues to guide the committee's work. The goal remains focused on measurable outcomes with established timelines, regular progress monitoring, and adaptive management approaches that allow for adjustments based on changing conditions and emerging opportunities.

Program Innovation and Expansion

The teacher apprenticeship program's full implementation represents the committee's highest priority for the coming year. This includes expanding Hawaiian language immersion pathways and evaluating the current special education licensing system to ensure it meets both state needs and national best practices.

Stakeholder Engagement

Continued collaboration between TECC members and non-member partners will focus on enhancing communication protocols and establishing shared accountability measures. The committee will also strengthen its federal and state policy advocacy coordination to ensure that Hawai'i's voice is heard in national education discussions while protecting local priorities and cultural values.

Conclusion

The 2024-2025 academic year demonstrated the power of collaborative leadership in addressing complex educational challenges. Despite facing unexpected crises and federal policy uncertainties, the TECC successfully advanced critical initiatives that will benefit

Hawai'i's students and teachers. The dramatic improvement in teacher hiring, coupled with innovative program development and strategic planning, positions Hawai'i's teacher education system for sustained success.