

**“DIVERSE PROVIDERS” IN ACTION:  
SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING IN HAWAII**

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## Foreword

Juliet Squire and I recently had the opportunity to take a close look at restructuring efforts underway in Hawaii's schools. As you will read in the pages ahead, Hawaii's unique single-district structure, partnerships with diverse providers, and encouraging early results make for an intriguing approach to restructuring. With the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind pending and a dearth of analyses on the broad range of restructuring strategies being pursued across the country, a study of Hawaii's strategy is fitting and, I hope, a useful lens for better understanding these efforts.

The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act requires districts to "restructure" Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress for five consecutive years. Today, 3,500 schools are required to restructure and the diverse provider model has received increased attention from the research and policy communities as one promising approach.

In 2005, the Hawaii Department of Education initiated a restructuring strategy that created a straightforward process for hiring outside providers as well as a system for holding providers accountable for results. The state's need for outside expertise has led it to seek partnerships with diverse providers and its single-district structure means the State and Local Education Agencies are one and the same. Today, 44 of Hawaii's 92 restructuring schools—a significantly higher percentage than in mainland states—currently partner with one of three state-approved comprehensive providers: America's Choice, EdisonLearning, and ETS.

Reformers across the country are wrestling with thorny questions when it comes to school restructuring and how best to employ the diverse provider model: What role is there for independent firms to help districts restructure their schools? How can outside firms best be engaged, utilized, and monitored? How should relationships with these providers be managed? I hope this analysis furthers the understanding of these issues and that education leaders and policymakers find it a useful contribution to determining how to address persistently low-performing schools.

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## Executive Summary

What to do about persistently low-performing schools is a pressing challenge for policymakers and educators across the nation. The No Child Left Behind Act's response was to require districts to "restructure" Title I schools that fail to make adequate yearly progress for five consecutive years. Little research has been done on how states are implementing NCLB's school restructuring requirement. Hawaii, with its heavy reliance on a diverse provider model and unique SEA-LEA structure, is a valuable laboratory for a close examination of restructuring.

In 2005, the Hawaii Department of Education created a straightforward process for hiring outside comprehensive providers. Hawaii vetted applications from ten aspiring providers based on their ability to offer leadership development, instructional support, and data assessment and analysis, and approved three: America's Choice, EdisonLearning, and ETS. State officials streamlined procurement by writing state-wide contracts and meet quarterly with complex area staff and comprehensive providers to review their performance. Forty-four of Hawaii's 92 restructuring schools—a significantly higher percentage than in mainland states—currently partner with one of these three state-approved comprehensive providers.

The ways in which the diverse provider model has played out in Hawaii illuminates important facets of Hawaii's educational culture and holds useful lessons for other states and locales. First, Hawaii's reliance on partnerships and its informal approach to quality control is shaped by a strong social network (the Coconut Wireless). Finding mechanisms to facilitate communication may be critical elsewhere. Second, Hawaii uses quarterly assessments, making student performance data available for the first time. Third, the transparency created by increased data and the presence of providers lend principals the political cover to make tough decisions. Fourth, by addressing union opposition at the state level and streamlining the procurement process, Hawaii shielded principals and complex area superintendents from distractions and obstacles. Finally, regular meetings between state representatives, coupled with the quarterly assessments, promote a culture marked by attention to outcomes.

No one should mistake Hawaii's restructuring model for a wholesale effort to rethink or reinvent these schools. Rather, it is an attempt to apply focus, data, and expertise in a challenging state environment by encouraging the use of outside providers. It remains to be seen whether Hawaii's restructuring model will dramatically boost achievement in persistently low-performing schools or whether a more aggressive model is needed.

What to do about persistently low-performing schools is a pressing challenge for policymakers and educators across the nation. In 2001, the federal government responded by passing the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which includes a novel restructuring provision requiring districts to intervene in Title I schools that fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for five consecutive years. As Congress contemplates the reauthorization of NCLB, there is bipartisan agreement that fixing failing schools is a national priority. Districts are pursuing a variety of strategies in the 3,500 schools currently in restructuring,<sup>1</sup> but little research has been done on their implementation and execution. With this in mind, it is worth examining how individual states approach restructuring in order to understand the full array of strategies and glean lessons learned. Hawaii has partnered with diverse providers to a much greater degree than mainland states and its unusual procurement and accountability frameworks for managing these partnerships offer unique insights to states considering a similar approach.\*

NCLB requires states to establish performance benchmarks and test students in reading and math in grades 3 through 8, and at least once in high school to ensure that requisite percentages of students at each school are meeting the reading and math targets.<sup>2</sup> If an insufficient percentage in any of a school's subgroups (identified by race as well as by socioeconomic, special education, and English language learner status) score proficient on the state assessment in reading or math, the school is labeled as failing to make AYP. The law stipulates a cascade of remedies for schools that persistently fail to make AYP, culminating after five consecutive years when schools must be "restructured" by the school district.<sup>3</sup>

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\* This analysis draws on information from a variety of sources, including documents, newspaper reports, materials supplied by providers and the Hawaii Department of Education, publicly available data, and more than three dozen interviews and conversations with educators, service providers, and policymakers. Among those to whom the authors are particularly grateful for assistance are state superintendent Patricia Hamamoto, two current or former chairs of the state Board of Education, Hawaii's Title I officials, the head of Hawaii's teachers union, a number of complex area superintendents, a half-dozen principals, comprehensive service providers, and more than a dozen school faculty and school support personnel. The authors would also like to thank Tung Le and David Yang for their assistance in compiling Hawaii's student achievement data.

Restructuring is a two-year process; the first year is spent planning for restructuring and the second year is spent implementing the plan. NCLB lists five options for restructuring, including: “entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school; reopening the school as a charter school; replacing all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP; turning operation of the school over to the state, if the state agrees; or undertaking any other major restructuring of the school’s governance.”<sup>4</sup>

Little is known about the impact of restructuring, how frequently it is successful, or what approaches are the most promising. The scant work that addresses restructuring includes case studies of how restructuring has played out at the state level in California,<sup>5</sup> Colorado,<sup>6</sup> New Jersey,<sup>7</sup> Michigan,<sup>8</sup> and Pennsylvania,<sup>9</sup> as well as case studies of district restructuring<sup>10</sup> and individual restructured schools.<sup>11</sup>

The most systematic work tracking developments in restructuring thus far has been conducted by the Center for Education Policy (CEP), which has studied the restructuring strategies in 42 schools in five states: California, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, and Ohio. CEP finds that 88 percent of these schools chose the ill-defined “any other” restructuring option.<sup>12</sup> CEP also finds that fewer than 2 percent of schools in these states have chosen to reopen as a charter school and that California leads in the percentage of schools that have chosen to replace a majority of their staff—13 percent—while the other states fall somewhere below that mark.<sup>13</sup> California schools use an outside organization in 10 percent of schools, followed by Georgia and Ohio at 2 percent, and Maryland at 1 percent; Michigan did not hire an outside provider in any of its restructuring schools.

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) confirms these trends, observing that districts often choose more mild forms of restructuring because they are “threatened by

significant reforms that diminish their control.”<sup>14</sup> ECS explains that replacing staff and charter conversion “have led to intense political pressure and legal battles,” adding, “Many districts are thus wary about choosing reform strategies that include replacing teachers, while the use of charter status or private management is often seen as politically unpalatable.”<sup>15</sup>

While CEP notes that schools in Georgia and Michigan were more likely to make AYP than schools in other states, it concludes that “there is no statistical reason to suspect that any one of the federal restructuring options is more effective than another in helping schools to make AYP.”<sup>16</sup> None of this work claims to evaluate the effectiveness of restructuring, either writ large or of particular strategies—an inevitable limitation given the variability and newness of these efforts.

A small number of studies have examined one potentially promising strategy in which districts partner with competing management providers—termed a “diverse providers model.” The model has received increasing attention, and scholars have analyzed diverse providers to identify institutional characteristics that are best suited to lead school turnarounds.<sup>17</sup> Most have concentrated on Philadelphia Public Schools, where a diverse provider model has been in place since 2002. A RAND analysis of Philadelphia’s restructuring efforts compares the achievement differentials between diverse providers,<sup>18</sup> and another analysis looks specifically at the interventions made by Edison Schools.<sup>19</sup> A more recent study examined student achievement data in reading and math in order to determine the effect of the diverse provider model.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the Learning from Philadelphia’s School Reform Project has issued two studies which examine accountability, the balance of power between the district and providers, and the ability of the providers to successfully improve student achievement and bring their reforms to scale.<sup>21</sup>

This study does not try to evaluate the effectiveness of the diverse provider model, or how it was implemented in the state of Hawaii, but rather looks at the support mechanisms that

Hawaii has erected to facilitate partnerships with external expertise and how restructuring schools may have benefited from those arrangements.

### **Why Hawaii?**

For policymakers, observers, and education officials seeking ideas about how to tackle restructuring, Hawaii is a useful place to look. As the only state in the nation with a statewide school district, Hawaii operates as both a “state education agency” and a “local education agency.” This gives the state substantial freedom in designing and implementing intervention strategies and in working with external providers. Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, adds that this would lend “greater control for making positive and more immediate change, with the state agency as the ultimate accountability structure and the ultimate implementation mechanism.” Second, Hawaii’s island status has made it difficult to secure the talent or expertise it needs, necessitating a reliance on contracting external providers. Third, as a state that came late to standards-based reform and school accountability, Hawaii provides an instructive example of how to employ these tactics in a challenging environment.

None of these conditions suggest that restructuring in Hawaii will necessarily prove effective. To gauge the impact of Hawaii’s restructuring efforts, we compare the gains made by restructuring schools under contract with external providers over multiple years relative to the gains made by restructuring schools *not* under contract with external providers. This analysis compares two sets of schools, both persistently failing to make adequate yearly progress as gauged by Hawaii’s academic standards. The two groups have pursued improvement in different ways: one with a reliance on external partnerships and the other with a reliance on internal action

plans. For a policy audience, this sheds light on the difference between groups that took advantage of the diverse provider model and those that opted not to.

To gauge the relative efficacy of Hawaii's restructuring efforts, we used the HIDEOE public records to identify the 13 elementary and middle schools that were planning for restructuring and the 40 that were implementing restructuring in 2005 (the year Hawaii's restructuring strategy was initiated). Seventeen of those schools worked with an external comprehensive provider and the remaining 33 were restructured by superintendents who lead regional subdivisions of Hawaii's statewide district; these subdivisions are termed complex areas.<sup>†</sup> We compared the average increases in the percent of students proficient on the Hawaii Content and Performance Standards over the subsequent three year period. We also examined the gains over a two-year period for elementary and middle schools in restructuring from 2006 to 2008 to account for those restructuring schools that began or stopped working with external providers during the second year of the Hawaii restructuring effort. In 2006, three schools were planning for restructuring and 47 schools were implementing restructuring. Thirty schools partnered with an outside provider. Average gains were calculated separately for grades 3-5 and grades 6-8 (Note: For a K-8 school, gains in grades 3-8 are counted in one group and gains in grades 6-8 are counted in the other).

A successful restructuring strategy would show restructuring schools that partner with an external provider are making greater achievement gains than restructuring schools that chose not to partner with an external provider.

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<sup>†</sup> Three restructuring high schools also partnered with external providers.

Figure 1:

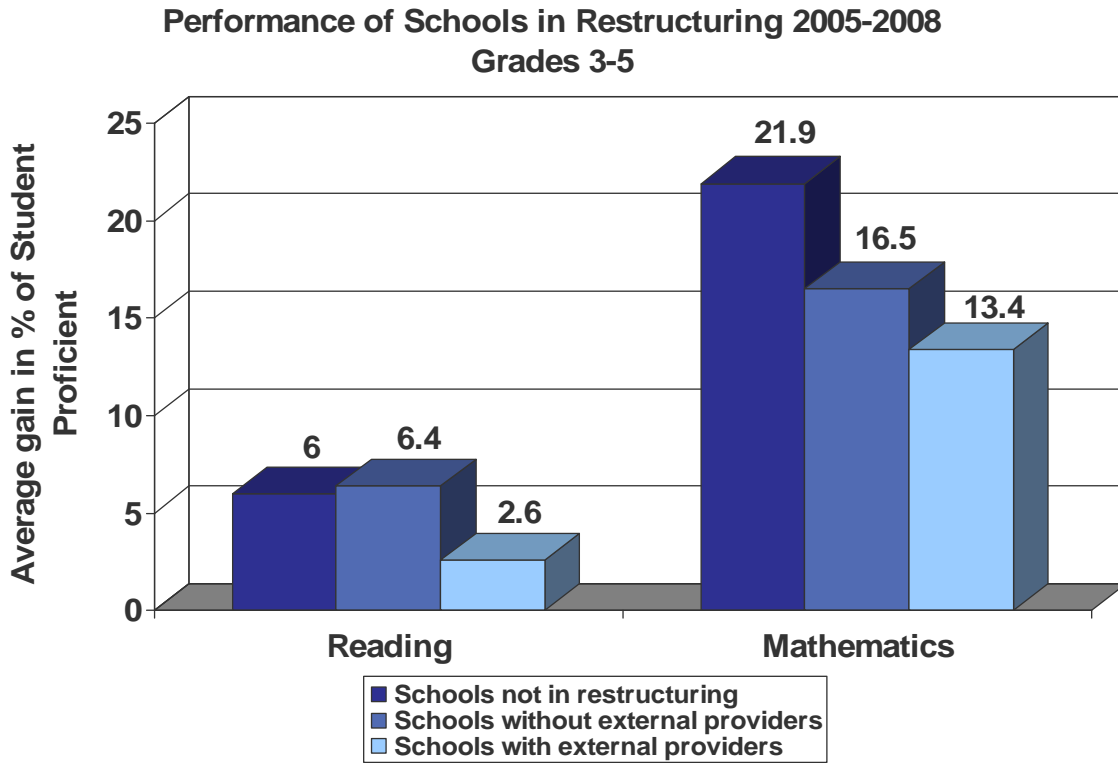


Figure 2

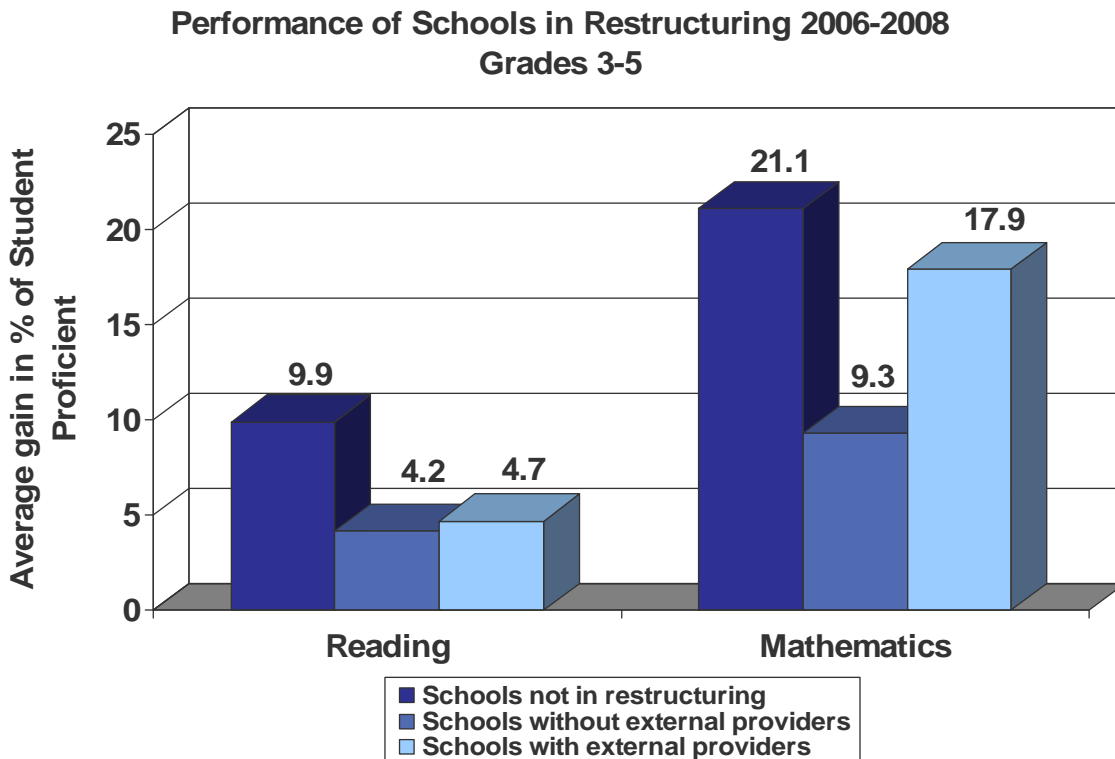


Figure 3

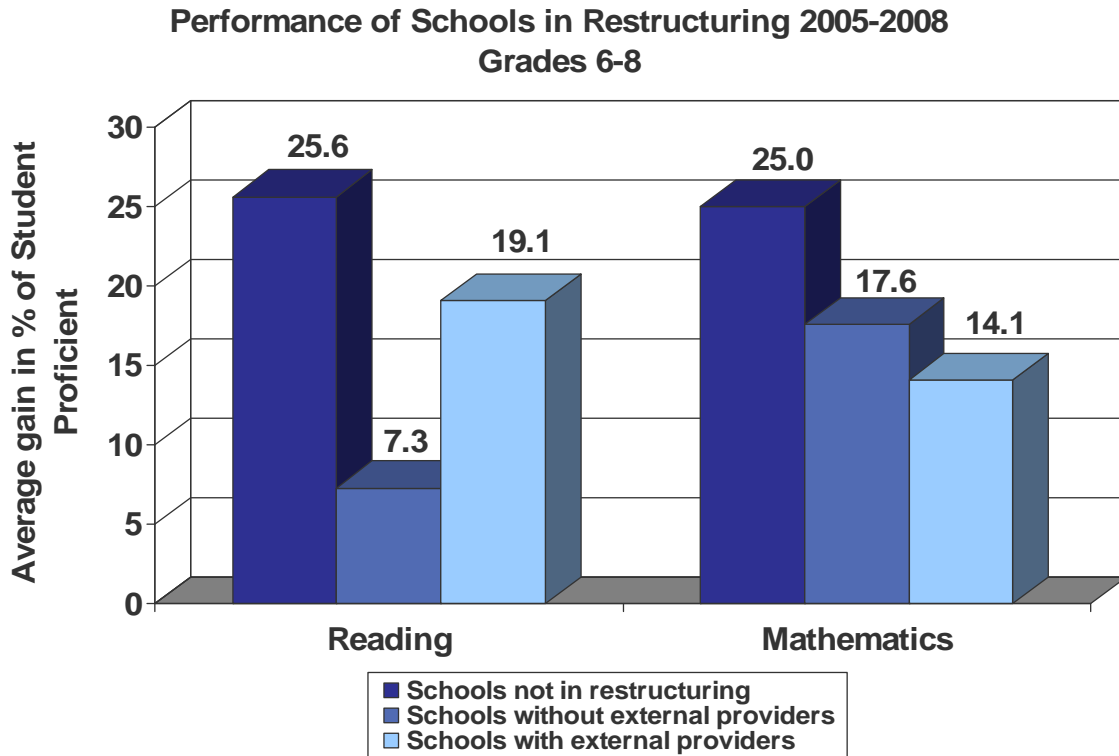
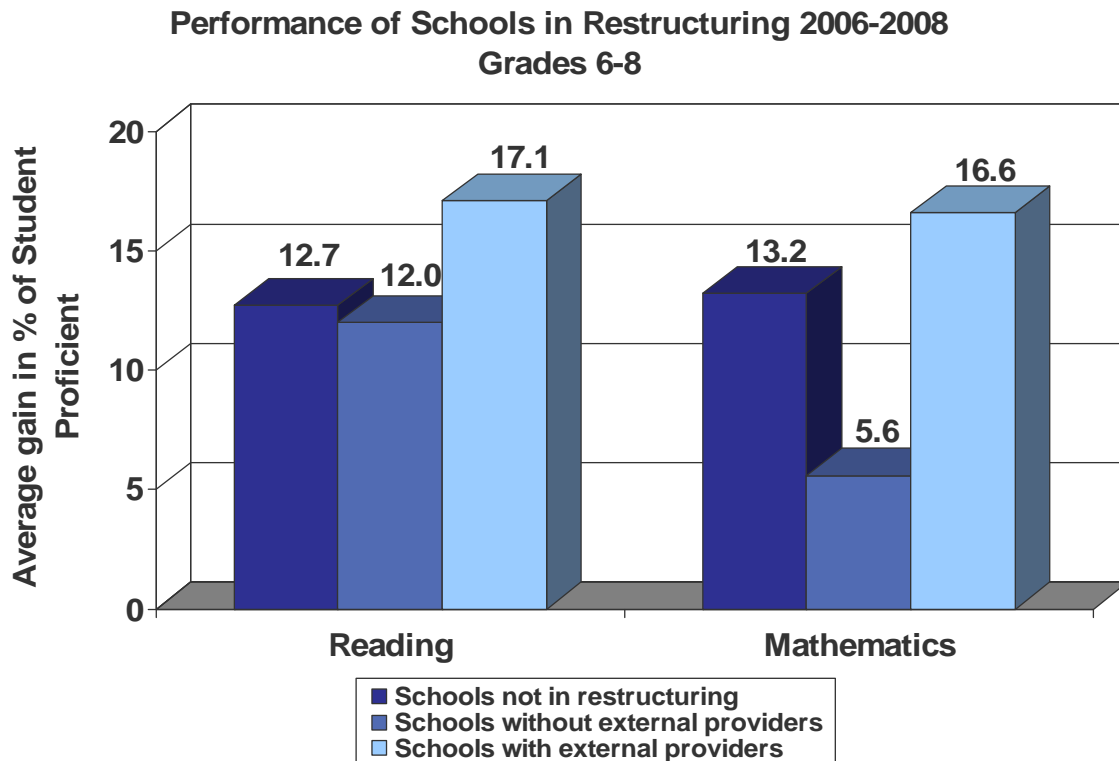


Figure 4



In Figures 1-4, we see two clear patterns. First, of the schools that entered restructuring in 2005—the first year of Hawaii’s restructuring strategy—those schools without external partners appeared to perform as well as those with external partners. Schools without external providers modestly outperformed those with external providers in mathematics and in grade 3-5 reading. Schools with external providers substantially outgained schools without external providers on grade 6-8 reading. However, after the first year of using external providers—for the 53 schools in restructuring from 2006 to 2008—the story is quite different. Schools with external partners substantially outgained schools without external providers in mathematics and grade 6-8 reading and gained slightly more ground in grade 3-5 reading. Whether data reflects a first year adjustment period under a new strategy or is an indication of the effectiveness of the diverse provider model, it is nonetheless cause for further study.

Figure 5

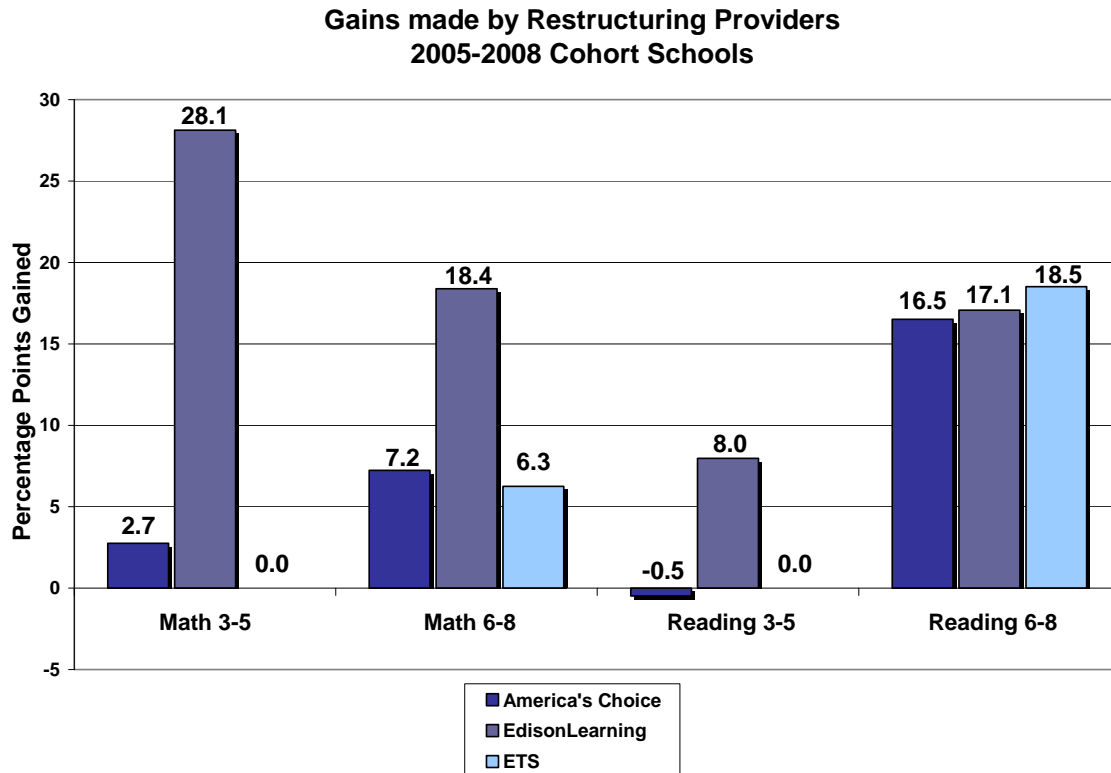
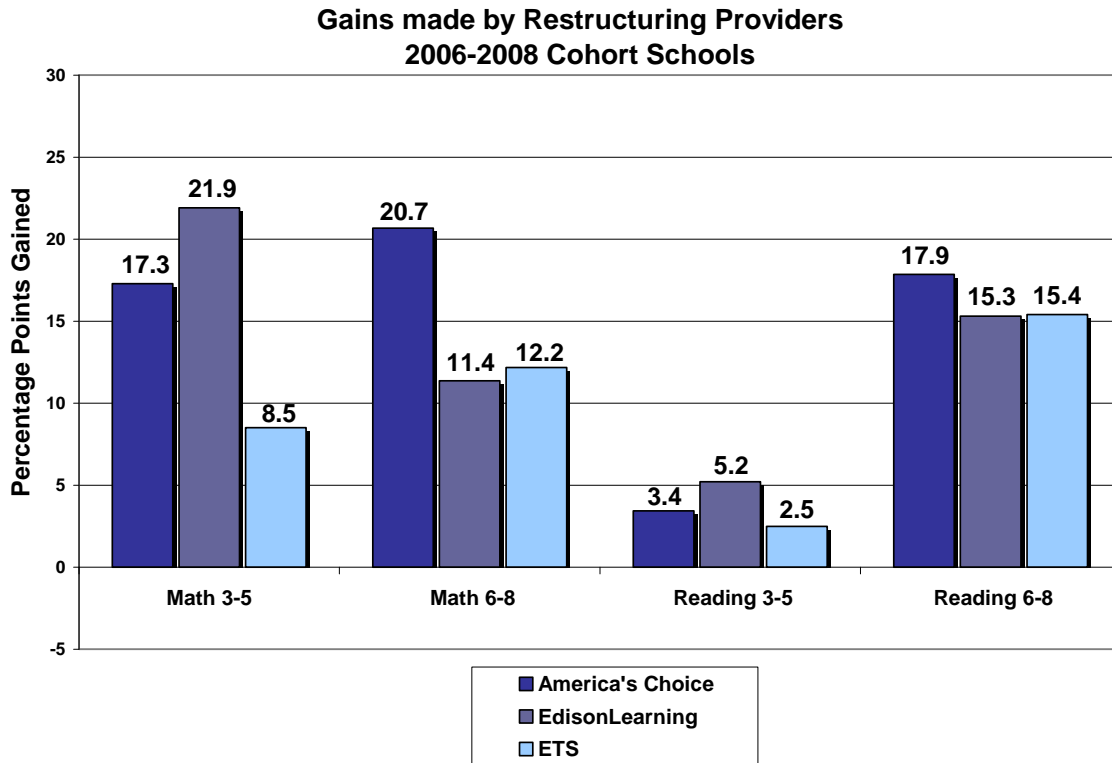


Figure 6



As noted, Hawaii's restructuring strategy looks quite different from those of other states, particularly in its utilization of external providers: forty-four of the 92 restructuring schools in Hawaii have partnered with a comprehensive provider for support. Those schools have all signed up with America's Choice, EdisonLearning, or ETS. The remaining schools are restructured by complex area superintendents, who may choose a variety of strategies and tools for restructuring, but are all included in the CAS category (see the next section for a fuller discussion). Over both a three-year and two-year period, EdisonLearning schools made greater gains in grades 3-5 in both reading and mathematics than those schools partnering with ETS or America's Choice. Schools partnering with the external providers made relatively similar gains in grade 6-8 reading over a two- and three-year time period, while EdisonLearning schools outgained America's Choice and ETS schools in grade 6-8 math over a three-year period and America's Choice outgained EdisonLearning and ETS in grade 6-8 math over a two-year period (see Figures 5 and 6).

One signal that Hawaii may be on a promising course is that the National Assessment of Education Progress, “the nation’s report card,” suggests that Hawaii, as a whole, is making progress in comparison to other states. Hawaiian students, who have historically lagged in reading and math achievement, made noticeable gains against peers nationally during the first years of restructuring (from 2005 to 2007). In a comparison of average state NAEP gains in grades 4 and 8 reading and math, Hawaii ranked tenth among the fifty states during those years.

Hawaii’s results thus far are modest. Overall, trends for schools working with external providers are promising, but by no means conclusive. While the analysis between restructuring schools that have or have not partnered with external providers allows for an in-state comparison of apples to apples, any trends should be interpreted with caution due to the short time frame and unique conditions. The reason to examine Hawaii is not to necessarily emulate its current approach, but to lift insights from its particular experiences and understand whether and how its approach might be employed to more substantial effect. Rather, this analysis provides a context for examining the support mechanisms that Hawaii has put in place and the experience of schools that are utilizing them.

### **The Hawaii Context**

Hawaii’s schools comprise a single statewide district managed through 15 complex areas. Enrollment has been decreasing since its peak of 189,000 students in the 1997-1998 school year;<sup>22</sup> there are currently 178,000 students<sup>23</sup> enrolled in 289 schools.<sup>24</sup> In a state heavily populated with both indigenous and immigrant groups, one in four students are Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian, one in five are Filipino, and one in ten students are Japanese. Just 15 percent are Caucasian.<sup>25</sup> The total budget for Hawaii public schools is approximately \$2 billion, with per-pupil expenditures hovering slightly above the national average at \$8,533. On the 2007 NAEP,

37 percent of Hawaii's fourth grade students scored proficient or above in mathematics, and 31 percent scored proficient or above in reading. Just 24 percent of eighth grade students scored proficient or above in mathematics and just 21 percent did so in reading.<sup>26</sup>

The school system is led by State Superintendent Patricia Hamamoto, who has worked in Hawaii schools for nearly thirty years. She served as deputy superintendent from 1999 until 2001, when she was appointed superintendent by the 14-member State Board of Education, and is currently in her second four-year contract as state chief. A small hiring pool in Hawaii makes it difficult to find new principals and means that efforts to enhance school leadership are necessarily focused on improving people already in place rather than recruiting replacements. Superintendent Hamamoto notes that over 50 percent of new hires come from out of state and concludes, "We don't have the depth" to replace principals.

Hawaii's teaching force also suffers from a lack of homegrown educators.<sup>27</sup> Roger Takabayashi, president of the Hawaii State Teachers Association, notes that the district must recruit approximately 1,500 new teachers each year and that approximately 50 percent of the 600 qualified teachers produced annually by in-state universities stay in Hawaii after graduation. The state works to recruit teachers from the mainland, but Takabayashi and school administrators note that most of these teachers do not stay beyond a few years. Wendy Takahashi, the principal of Nanakuli Elementary School on Oahu's leeward coast, notes, "We do all of our training here, and then they leave to go closer to home." A January 2008 report from the Hawaii Educational Policy Center pegs the need for fully licensed teachers (including attrition and un-licensed teachers) equal to 30 percent of the state's teaching workforce.<sup>28</sup> Only half of Hawaii's teachers have taught in their schools for more than 5 years.<sup>29</sup> While versions of this talent shortage are told across the continental United States, the constraints appear more severe in this island state.

Hawaii has historically lagged in matters of assessment, standards, and curricular coherence. Denise Matsumoto, who served on the Board of Education from 1988 to 2008, recalls that the state first adopted standards in 1994 and did not have an accountability system prior to the enactment of NCLB. State chief Hamamoto notes that Hawaii was the last state to pass an accountability law. She says, “We came into this picture very late.” A direct result was a dramatic degree of fragmentation in curriculum, assessment, and instruction, with individual schools and teachers going their own way. As recently as 2006, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute’s “State of State Standards” gave Hawaii standards an “F” in U.S. history, geography, math, and science and a “C” in English.<sup>30</sup> Hamamoto notes, “We have teachers out there who still want to do what they want to do.” That context makes the state’s role in providing data and transparency a central element of its restructuring initiative, but suggests that these efforts reflect a state playing catch-up to its neighbors rather than breaking new ground.

In 2002, when the first Hawaii schools entered restructuring under NCLB, organizations were recruited from the mainland to help address its curricular fragmentation, underdeveloped data system, and lack of in-state capacity. These arrangements followed the pattern that had been set in the 1990s, when island schools turned to mainland providers—particularly the school improvement operation America’s Choice—to aid with curriculum and instruction.

The legislature adopted Act 51, the Reinventing Education Act, in 2004. In it, the overwhelmingly Democratic legislature responded to Republican Governor Linda Lingle’s proposal for radical decentralization of Hawaii’s schools by adopting a plan which overhauled the state funding formula and shifted toward a weighted student funding model, bolstered school-community councils, and granted HODOE increased control over school facilities and maintenance. That Act enjoyed strong support from the Board of Education and the superintendent. Loren Moreno, the *Honolulu Advertiser*’s education reporter, says, “The

legislature, the DOE and the Board tend to work together fairly well,” while contending that the superintendent’s relationship with the governor is not as strong as has traditionally been the case.

The replacement of school staff and the use of charter conversions are absent in Hawaii’s restructuring. Patricia Park, head of the Leilehua-Mililani-Waiialua complex area in central Oahu, explains the reluctance to replace teachers: “We are 3,000 miles away from the mainland, which means there is not a pool of people ... we work very hard on getting highly qualified teachers, but we don’t have a surplus of people here.” Moreover, Sharon Nakagawa, the administrator of the state’s Special Programs Management Section (SPMS), reminds that, “NCLB [makes clear that it does] not supersede state laws, MOUs, or union agreements. That limits what Hawaii can do in terms of removal of people.” The DOE school improvement framework does not cite staff replacement as an option for school restructuring.<sup>31</sup>

While charter conversion is an option for restructuring schools, no schools thus far have taken that course<sup>‡</sup>—which could be attributed to union opposition and reduced per-pupil funding. Conversion to charter status requires a vote by the school’s teachers and other key constituencies—a hurdle that observers describe as daunting. Nina Buchanan, professor at the University of Hawaii-Hilo and a member of Hawaii’s Charter School Review Panel, cites resistance from the teachers and principals unions as well as concerns about lost funding. Former school board member Denise Matsumoto also notes that charter schools have been hampered by enormous unpredictability in their funding streams, observing that the “guessing game” has made it difficult for charters to know what to expect.

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<sup>‡</sup> Informed sources defer on this count, with some suggesting that no schools have used this strategy and others that two schools have.

These limitations for staff replacement and charter conversions are not unique to Hawaii—as reflected by their infrequent use noted in the CEP reports—and are not our focus here. Instead, we turn to the restructuring approach developed by HIDOE in 2005.

### **Hawaii’s Approach to NCLB Restructuring**

In 2005, HIDOE developed a restructuring framework, which the board approved. The framework relies heavily on comprehensive providers’ partnerships with schools, accords a key role to the CASs, and is frequently a personal strategy that involves informal collaboration rather than strict procedures or processes. Backed by the personal authority of a strong superintendent, who has pushed her appointed CASs and principals to take action in persistently low-performing schools, the approach has focused on enabling schools to draw on outside providers. This has strengthened the hand of principals while delivering assessment, expertise, and instructional support.

Superintendent Hamamoto identifies the key elements of the Hawaii approach to low-performing schools as the insistence on addressing persistently low-performing Title I and non-Title I schools identically; the use of quarterly assessments of all schools in reading and math in grades 3-8 and 10 (as well as additional testing in K–2, given Hawaii’s particular focus on reading by grade 3); the role of state teams that conduct comprehensive needs assessments for restructuring schools; and the availability of state funds for CASs to secure outside providers that can supply additional curricular and instructional support. She explains that these efforts took on added urgency because Hawaii was late to the accountability table and notes that NCLB was a more “traumatic” transition for Hawaii than for other states that already had accountability systems in place.

## The Restructuring Framework

While the Board of Education writes policies, implementation is largely left to the discretion of the superintendent. Board members explain that the superintendent keeps them informed and they have the ultimate authority to replace her—but no formal policies define how the superintendent should approach restructuring.

HIDOE officials saw a profound need for external expertise to restructure failing schools, but knew that vesting authority in external providers to manage Hawaii schools would be a non-starter. Special Programs Management Section (SPMS) administrator Sharon Nakagawa says, “We knew that there was tremendous opposition to a managed system.” Instead, HIDOE worked to develop a partnership model where comprehensive providers would be hired to work with school leadership teams. Nakagawa explains, “We researched what existed and what options were available. We basically found out that no one really knew what successful restructuring options looked like—so we had to design our own.”

The Special Programs Management Section issued a Request For Proposal (RFP) in fall 2004 and received 10 applications. An initial five-person committee from the SPMS vetted the proposals for key elements: curricular and instructional support, staff and leadership development, school culture, staff accessibility, and a built-in assessment system accompanied by the expertise to assist teachers with data analysis. While officials state that a provider’s track record was an important consideration, few if any providers have conclusive evidence on their performance in other locales, suggesting that vetting for quality control necessarily focused more on program components than demonstrated records of success.

Three of the ten applicants met the state’s criteria: America’s Choice, EdisonLearning, and ETS. America’s Choice, which has worked in Hawaii since the 1990s, lacked the data component but was approved when it subcontracted with SchoolNet.

The SPMS streamlined the procurement process for these three comprehensive providers by drafting state-wide contracts and getting the requisite approval of the state attorney general. Previously, school principals who partnered with outside firms had worked with the central procurement office to write individual contracts. Now, school officials would simply need to fill out an invoice. Elaine Takenaka, a consultant to the Special Programs Management Section who helped to develop the contracts, notes that this allows providers to work with a school with a lead-time of several weeks compared to several months.

Subsequently, the SPMS ran an additional RFP for firms that could provide specific, rather than comprehensive, services to schools being restructured by their CASs. These “array-of-services” providers often offer more specialized expertise and frequently target subgroups like English language learners or special education students. Their services include various combinations of assessment and data analysis, curriculum alignment, or instructional support. Array-of-services providers include ETS, WestEd, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, among 19 other national and regional organizations and individuals. Lisa DeLong, complex area superintendent for the Nanakuli-Wainae complex area on the leeward coast of Oahu, suggests that the monitoring of array-of-services providers is less systematic than for comprehensive providers. She says, “It can’t be that hard to get on the list.”

Comprehensive providers meet quarterly with the CASs and with the SPMS to review the progress in their schools. Array-of-services providers meet quarterly with CASs. While providers are not expected to bring schools to AYP within the first year, HIDOE has established a “significant gains” metric to determine whether schools are on the right track. This data, along with the meetings and reports of the CASs and the SPMS, are used in renewing the annual contracts. (Hawaii’s Constitution requires that the contracts are annual.) A similar RFP for

comprehensive and array-of-services providers is issued annually and is now reviewed by a team of 25 individuals from the school, complex, and state level.

CASs ultimately choose whether to restructure the schools in their complex area themselves, to partner with array-of-services providers for more limited assistance, or to hire a provider to supply comprehensive support. HODOE conducts a “comprehensive needs assessment” for each school entering restructuring, which provides school leaders with a diagnostic look at its weaknesses. It also hosted a fair at the Hawaii Convention Center in 2006 and 2007 to provide CASs and school leaders with information about the options and an opportunity to hear presentations from the various providers. CASs were then free to choose the comprehensive or array-of-services providers they deemed the best fit for the needs of their school. Complex area superintendent Patricia Park explains, “You could go to different sessions and hear the different sales pitch from all of them.” While budget limitations prevented HODOE from hosting the fair in 2008, they distributed an extensive brochure listing the providers and describing the services that they offer.

In practice, both complex area and school leaders describe a process where they have substantial discretion in determining the nature of restructuring, with few absolute limits on utilizing preferred providers and where state funding is frequently an informal, non-formulaic process. Given Hawaii’s small size and tight social network, school and state officials report few hard-and-fast procedures, with a preference instead for decision-making through collegial give-and-take. Indeed, with just 289 K-12 schools in Hawaii, superintendent Hamamoto estimates having a personal relationship with over half of the state’s principals. Her state board support and decades of tenure in the system allow her to drive much of the process through informal means. In this vein, the *Honolulu Advertiser*’s Moreno says, “She’s pretty strong,” and state

senator and the vice-chair of the Senate's education committee Michele Kidani says, "She seems to get a pretty good rating from most people."

### The Role of Complex Area Superintendents

As a unified state system, Hawaii does not have school districts or superintendents. Rather, the state superintendent utilizes a network of 15 complex area superintendents (CAS), each of whom typically oversees two to four high schools along with the feeder middle and elementary schools. These CASs are not independent operators but arms of the superintendent, charged with supporting school leaders. Indeed, CASs actually make less than principals, with a pay scale that tops out at more than \$10,000 below the scale negotiated for principals by the influential Hawaii Government Employees Association. Board of Education Chair Donna Ikeda states, "CASs don't get paid very much... but principals are very well paid. So now the recruiting becomes even harder." The CASs work in concert with their teams, particularly their Title I Linkers and their School Renewal Specialists, though accounts differ as to the roles of these complex area personnel.

The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* observed in 2005, when the state restructuring policy was taking shape, that Hawaii's status as a single school district would seem to render the threat of a state takeover redundant. However, it reported superintendent Hamamoto's explanation that "Hawaii's approach complies with the law's requirements because the complex area superintendent, rather than the principal, will make the critical decisions."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the state's framework for restructuring indicates that a CAS: "determines which restructuring option will be used; directs and manages the school's restructuring efforts; makes leadership decisions for the school, including personnel decisions; manages all curriculum and instruction for the school; and exercises budgetary authority over all school funds and resources, except funds designated to the restructuring provider."<sup>33</sup>

In practice, the distinction does not appear so absolute, as many complex area superintendents appear to give their principals substantial say in the selection of external providers. Lisa Joy Andres, a school renewal specialist and Title I Linker for the Honolulu schools, notes that in some cases, “The CAS left it up to the principals which [provider] to consult with,” and that the CAS “either approved or disapproved, though I think he approved everybody’s selection.” In other complex areas, CASs made the decision without input from principals or teachers. Art Souza, superintendent of the West Hawaii complex area on the Big Island, relates, “The ultimate decision was with me and I had to make sure that that was understood by everyone...But I did make presentations to all of the faculty to explain what the different providers could offer” and providers were given the opportunity to talk to principals and faculty.

### The Funding Question

Between 2005 and 2008, cost considerations were not a factor in the state’s approach to funding restructuring. Takenaka, the consultant who works with the Special Programs Management Section, explains that the SPMS was able to fund the costs of restructuring the schools until this year with a focus on, “What do we need to do to help this school make AYP?” In light of looming budget cuts, fiscal educational specialist Iris Mizuguchi predicts, “This coming school year is going to be a big challenge.”

The state negotiates set prices with the comprehensive providers and then CASs have the discretion, frequently in collaboration with school leaders, over which to use. Most Hawaii schools in restructuring receive about \$115,000 in Title I funding, an amount insufficient to pay the \$350,000 annual cost of EdisonLearning’s per school services or the similar costs of the other providers. The state uses its \$12.8 million<sup>34</sup> in federal School Improvement Funds and additional state resources to provide schools with the necessary dollars to afford the comprehensive

providers they prefer. For CASs who choose to partner with a comprehensive provider, funds are bundled and allocated to providers at the state level. The National Governors Association's Dane Linn suggests that hiring providers under a state-wide contract may well allow for economies of scale and for Hawaii to negotiate a more competitive price.

CASs who opt not to utilize a comprehensive provider retain control over Title I dollars and can use them to hire additional personnel or vendors to provide more limited services. In some cases, a principal who has accumulated discretionary funds may contract with an array-of-services provider that is not on the state's approved list. Such instances are rare, since they require a principal to write his own contract, but there are no regulations that prohibit schools from using discretionary or leftover funds for this purpose.

### **Making Hawaii's Approach Work**

Five elements, purposive and contextual, help explain how Hawaii restructuring plays out in practice. These elements suggest that the state's unique utilization of external partnerships is accompanied by efforts to lend political cover, build infrastructure, and provide crucial support and monitoring.

### **Building Relationships and the "Coconut Wireless"**

Hawaii's restructuring effort is informed by the close-knit culture that infuses Hawaii's schooling. Those social ties play a critical role in sharing information and help school leaders and CASs to be informed consumers of external assistance, while requiring that effective providers tend to their professional relationships as well as technical acumen. The University of Hawaii-Hilo's Buchanan concurs, saying, "It's not necessarily about the model itself but about the personal nature of who is delivering it and whether they're available to ask questions and to help."

Coupled with the inability to replace personnel and the state's decision to bring in providers as partners rather than managers, this has meant that the ability to build relationships and trust is essential. Because the Hawaii model entails providers acting as supports, successful providers are able to tailor their programs to the schools they serve. EdisonLearning's achievement vice president Babette DeWree says, "We always try to work in reference to what you're saying you need. And you might not realize what you need but, as we walk through the building, we can talk about it and then you suddenly realize that that's what you need. And then we have it right here for you—but we never came in and said, 'This is how you have to do it.'"

Patricia Park, CAS for the Leilehua-Mililani-Waialua complex area, explains: "In the end, a lot depends on relationships and expertise and knowledge. So you've got to do the relationship first and then the people are willing to accept the knowledge and the expertise and the assistance." The expertise and accessibility of the providers were consistently identified by interviewees as critical factors in a school's ability to make progress.

When external providers were first contracted, some school leaders voiced appreciation for the extra support while others resisted bringing in outside expertise. SPMS's Sharon Nakagawa notes that when schools began to see improvement, news spreads by what Hawaiians call "Coconut Wireless," an informal word-of-mouth communications system that rapidly disseminates information between schools. "When [principals] begin to see how they're improving and how they're becoming more successful, that's very empowering... [and then] other principals entering restructuring see the significant changes and improvement of other schools and will request these providers. ... Success breeds success." For this reason, providers have cause to take their reputations and relationships very seriously.

## A Data Rich Environment

A priority for the state, and particularly superintendent Hamamoto, has been promoting performance transparency and ensuring the availability of data. The most significant effort on this front is the requirement that schools conduct quarterly assessments, in addition to the state’s annual assessment. Schools are not required to use any one assessment system, instead using a variety—Hamamoto states that Hawaii is currently in the process of reducing the number of choices. Restructuring schools typically use those provided by their partner organization. While the multiplicity of assessments has led to fragmentation and prevents comparison across schools, it allows schools to shape instruction based on more frequent and systematic data. State board chair, Donna Ikeda, who previously chaired the Ways and Means Committee in the state Senate, observes, “One of [Hamamoto’s] strengths is her openness and data availability. It’s a real change. When I was in the Senate, getting info...was like pulling teeth.”

Several teachers and principals voiced the importance of data. A teacher at Palolo elementary school stated, “[We] get a print out of the assessment and see which items a student missed—and then we can re-teach those items.” King Intermediate School principal Sheena Alaiasa says, “It’s all data—everything is data driven.” This focus on data, while a common refrain across the land, is relatively new to Hawaii.

Hawaii has also implemented a “comprehensive needs assessment”—essentially a “forensic” audit of schools in restructuring. Superintendent Hamamoto explains that it entails a team of four or more state officials, sometimes including staff from the CAS or school, conducting a two to three day assessment of personnel, practices, governance, data systems, and instruction at the school in question. This report becomes the basis for diagnosis and determining intervention strategies. The resulting pressure amounts to less of a “hammer” than a

counseling session, laments state board chair Ikeda, who notes that the state has little ability to remove staff or take dramatic action.

CAS Souza notes that the needs assessment provides the opportunity to gather all of the relevant data. Based on the needs assessment, he explains, “We’ll formulate a plan that will determine what level of restructuring and what kinds of interventions are needed.”

CAS Patricia Park voices similar sentiments. She considers the needs assessment “a big help,” explaining that the DOE teams come into all schools before they enter restructuring and do a comprehensive study of where it is, and where it needs to be. “These were like outside eyes and...because they are DOE here in Hawaii, they know the different resources.”

Various CASs, providers, and principals have credited the needs assessment with reinforcing the state’s emphasis on data and accountability, creating transparency, and providing an opening for uncomfortable measures. Ruth Silberstein, principal of Palolo Elementary in Honolulu, indicates that the comprehensive needs assessment initially conducted by the Los Angeles County Office of Education at Palolo Elementary helped her to “clean out” the school. Although the cleaning out was limited to reassigning one teacher to a different grade level and encouraging one school counselor to leave on her own—modest changes—the needs assessment plays a role in identifying problem areas and weak teachers in a culture where they were previously given a pass.

### Political Cover

Perhaps the most commonly echoed refrain from people in various education positions is the degree to which island culture emphasizes harmony and personal relationships. While this has often been said of public school culture generally, the degree to which it shapes schooling in Hawaii is notable even to a veteran observer of school systems. EdisonLearning’s regional general manager in Hawaii John Kreick said, “You don’t make waves. This is not a culture

where you call people out publicly.” Consequently, principals have historically balked when faced with making unpopular decisions, promoting individual accountability, or upending familiar routines.

The needs assessments have increased transparency, while external providers have created the opportunity to alter those familiar niceties. External providers, who are less wedded to the prevailing culture and more compelled to produce substantial achievement gains, are willing to act as “bad cop” surrogates. As CAS Lisa DeLong states, “Restructuring gives everyone a little more authority.”

CAS Souza explains, “I think the providers work to some extent as that external eye and ear for the principal and also a shield for the principal...A lot of our principals function with this mentality of harmony over truth. ...One of the key roles the external providers play is that they can be the bad cop when they have to.”

One intriguing element that is pointed to repeatedly is the perception that providers are “experts” and outsiders—which appears to lend them an added degree of credibility and authority. Alaiasa, principal of King Intermediate School which partners with WestEd as an array-of-services provider, tells her teachers, “Ask them questions. Ask them, that’s what they’re here for. They have a little bit more foresight as to what we can do to help our school.” She adds, “Plus, it’s an outside view looking in, whereas we might not see—because we’re too close.”

NGA’s Dane Linn agrees that “anytime you bring in an external provider, it takes the monkey off the principal’s back.” However, he suggests that limiting the authority of external providers by bringing them in as partners, rather than as management, has diminished their impact. “They’ve gone one step further, but they haven’t gone all the way.... Let the people who know how to do this make the decisions.”

## Streamlining Procurement and Providing Contract Support

As CASs have sought to identify and work with comprehensive providers, an important ingredient has been HIDOE's efforts to shield CASs and schools from distractions and obstacles. While teachers unions frequently oppose outside vendors like those hired in Hawaii, CASs and principals did not have to deal with union opposition because it was addressed at the state level. One former district employee reports that the unions "weren't happy" and had frequent meetings with HIDOE. But any issues were resolved by the state office. Title I Linker and School Renewal Specialist Lisa Joy Andres, explaining how political complications are addressed, says: "The state does all of that for us. From my point of view, it's a done deal. By the time it comes to our level, my complex area superintendent says, 'Here are three [providers]. This is who we have to choose from.'" This feature of Hawaii's framework is unique and may depend on the state doubling as a district, but NGA's Linn recognizes the benefits that it can offer: "In other places... the responsibility is—legally and logistically—the district's. ... There is no interaction between district and state on any procurement issues.... I bet districts would love to have that streamlined."

More broadly, HIDOE has sought to craft a manageable and user-friendly procurement process. By taking responsibility for writing contracts with providers and negotiating the approval process, HIDOE has made straightforward a process that was once drawn out and painful. Under the new system, Andres explains, "We know what they're providing and all of the details that are pertinent to the schools. So when [a CAS] decides to hire them, they can just write it into their budget proposal and academic and financial plans for the following year, knowing that the provider has already been approved by the procurement office."

## Quality Control and Monitoring

Hawaii has paid close attention to the effectiveness of providers. A persistent challenge for the state has been policing the quality of potential providers, discouraging schools from making bad choices, and ensuring accountability for both schools and providers. Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), suggests that Hawaii's unique structure may allow it to avoid the "disconnect between districts and states" that has hampered other states. He says, "It might be a cleaner mechanism and you might get much more direct control over the process where you have that kind of reporting mechanism going directly to the state level."

Through the procurement process, HIDOE reinforces the focus on data and accountability in two ways. First, HIDOE employs an evidence-based standard in determining which providers to approve. Second, they require that approved providers have a developed data system that can be installed in the schools. NGA's Linn says, "Very few states have any level of accountability for providers. ... They feel as though once they turn over the contract to an independent provider, they've fulfilled their responsibility." Perhaps Hawaii's most important steps on accountability are its quarterly student assessment requirement and the creation of the "significant improvement" metric for schools. At the school level, that data informs instruction, but it is also used by CASs and state officials to monitor performance, push school leaders to assess providers' performance, and ensure that all contracting decisions are focused on outcomes.

In practice, once providers are in the field, quality control is pursued in two ways—both more reliant on informal communications than systematic administrative directive. First, individual CASs receive quarterly performance updates on their schools and meet regularly with principals and providers to assess achievement gains. Because providers are retained on one-

year contracts, they can be readily replaced by dissatisfied CASs. This helps create a sense of urgency for providers and school leaders. As the principal of Nanaikapono Elementary School Elden Esmeralda says, “At some point, maybe, if ... the gains aren’t quick enough, [the CAS] may say we can’t” continue with current providers. The simplicity of the contracting system frees CASs to focus on monitoring and enforcing contracts, and making sure that promised services are being provided.

Second, the SPMS receives regular reports from the CASs on their school performance and meets quarterly with comprehensive providers to review their data and performance. Where data suggest disappointing progress, schools may be encouraged to reconsider their providers. However, little of this is formalized. Elaine Takenaka says, “The Special Programs Management Section’s job is not to make decisions for the CASs.” She explains, “It is done very collegially....the staff recommending that maybe this other provider is a better fit. But it’s not about this office telling them what to do. They are encouraged to talk to their colleagues...see what they’ve done to bring about improvements at their schools.” The administrator of the Special Programs Management Section (SPMS), Sharon Nakagawa, points out that CASs and the state superintendent may have a stronger hand in making these changes and asserts that HIDEOE is willing to terminate contracts when deemed appropriate. “The CAS or the superintendent may determine that a school’s student performance is flat-lining and may require the school to select a different model of services or a different provider.”

In perhaps the clearest illustration of HIDEOE taking an active role in quality control, superintendent Hamamoto reports that, “We’ve dropped America’s Choice from several schools and have gone with EdisonLearning and others” because the data showed insufficient gains. The Board of Education has also taken an active role in this process, calling in each of the fifteen

CASs during spring and summer 2008 to provide a detailed report on the status of their schools and improvement efforts.

### **Hawaii’s “Diverse Provider” Approach in Practice**

In the 2005-2006 school year, EdisonLearning and America’s Choice each partnered with seven schools and ETS Pulliam partnered with six. The remaining 33 schools were to be restructured by their CAS. Today, EdisonLearning partners with 34 schools, America’s Choice with 10, and ETS with 8;<sup>§</sup> forty-eight schools are being restructured by their CAS, often partnering with outside firms for a variety of specified services, including 13 that work with ETS on an array-of-services basis. Conversations with principals suggest three key elements that comprehensive providers offer: political cover, intensive data and assessment systems, and instructional coaching and curricular support. Given the nature of the selection process, principals and CASs can select providers that they deem the best match for their school, and providers, in turn, seek to emphasize their ability to customize their services to each school. One principal explains, “Both America’s Choice and EdisonLearning have been really good about that. They’ve made every attempt possible to personalize things for a school.”

While most school level officials praised the ability of comprehensive providers to customize their services, it appears that all three providers try to approach their role in broadly similar ways. The real differences tend to characterize the particular kinds of curricular models, instructional aides, and coaching strategies that various providers employ—rather than their broader strategy for school improvement.

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<sup>§</sup> Edison is partnering with six schools that are *not* in restructuring. ETS and America’s Choice are each partnering with one school that is not in restructuring.

### Closer Look: EdisonLearning

When comprehensive providers were first hired in 2005, EdisonLearning was contracted to work with seven schools. EdisonLearning has added schools each year, including 21 new schools in fall 2008, totaling 34 schools in the 2008-2009 school year. The charge for EdisonLearning services is \$350,000 annually per school for comprehensive services, which decreases if schools make AYP and choose to continue partnering with EdisonLearning in a “step-down” relationship. This arrangement involves less reading and math curricula support but maintains the data assessment and some coaching.

EdisonLearning’s vice presidents for educational services (VPES) lead teams of several EdisonLearning staff, who work with school administrators and teachers. As EdisonLearning’s Kreick says, “What we do is very blue collar. It’s very in the trenches.” EdisonLearning’s Babette DeWree explains, “We’ll show up to a school 87 times if we need to.”

School personnel report that EdisonLearning shapes its services to their needs. At the same time, EdisonLearning personnel see themselves as generally responding to a relatively consistent set of needs. The result is an interesting twist on “customization.” EdisonLearning is not in a position to insist on a particular model or to install one, but, as DeWree says, “They may not realize that everyone needs all of these things. So we usually talk to the schools and say, ‘What is it that you think you need right now?’ and then we will fit it in to what we think they need.” That involves using the school’s academic and financial plans to identify places where EdisonLearning staff sees weakness.

EdisonLearning’s role as “outsider” and “bad cop” can often lend principals the political cover to be stronger leaders and have difficult conversations with teachers. Kreick observes, “There really is not an outward pressure for change or reform... so when you bring in a provider model like this ... there’s an outside force that’s impacting this process that didn’t exist before.”

In addition, providers offer schools a monthly assessment and an integrated data system. Ruth Silberstein, principal at Palolo Elementary School, works with EdisonLearning and emphasizes that her teachers do not have the time to create benchmarks on their own. “We need agencies or companies that have done that, that have the assessments that we can pick up and use.” Teachers at Palolo elementary report that EdisonLearning support staff, typically alongside school-based staff, work with teachers on item analysis and instructional strategies. A Palolo teacher says, “The providers have very useful information about how students are doing in a particular area. They see what they’re weak at so hopefully we can catch it.”

Before EdisonLearning began working with their schools, Kreick observes that the curriculum was fragmented, with teachers in the same school, grade, and subject often using different textbooks. The EdisonLearning team compiled hundreds of “curriculum companions” for grades K–8 that are aligned to the Hawaii State Assessment. These explain the standards, provide sample test questions, and offer strategies for teaching each standard. Silberstein explains that an EdisonLearning team came to the school on a weekly basis, including the achievement advisor, language arts and math coaches, and, occasionally, ELL and special education coaches.

#### A Closer Look: ETS

ETS was also contracted in 2005 to partner with six of the original cohort of 24 restructuring schools. Initially hired as a comprehensive provider, ETS has since developed a variety of packages that provide schools with an array-of-services in data and instructional coaching. In the 2008-2009 school year, ETS partners in some capacity with 21 schools on four islands and works as a comprehensive provider with eight. The price-tag for their services varies depending on the school’s package. The staff at ETS consists of six people who visit schools according to the frequency and type of services stipulated in the contracts.

Shirley Olson, ETS' contract manager in Hawaii, explains an approach that emphasizes a collaborative rather than a management system. She explains, "We very much consider ourselves a resource and our job, our role, is to build capacity in the school. ... We bring in things that work based on research and our own experience in other schools and try to instigate or institutionalize some of those processes and methodologies. So we really do see ourselves as not being permanent."

ETS has played the role of "bad cop" in its contracted schools. Robin Kitsu, curriculum coordinator at Nanakuli High & Intermediate School, relates that when ETS began to draw back after three years of working in the school, teachers reverted to past practices without ETS' "parental" eye. The school's principal Darin Piliialoha relates that he provides professional development for struggling teachers and pressures them to improve, but Kitsu adds that they have often asked ETS for more support when these efforts encounter resistance. He explains, "I've had teachers tell me, 'you're not in administration, you can't tell me what to do.' ... So we went back to ETS and said, 'We need your help, we need your backing.'"

ETS provides a data and assessment system to its partnering schools, which can also lend transparency and strengthen the principal's authority. This data system includes a quarterly assessment that serves as a tool both for CASs to track a school's progress and for teachers to track the progress and identify the needs of individual students. ETS' Olson explains, "So we have longitudinal data and ... quarterly assessments so that complex area as well as state level staff are looking at apples and apples when they're comparing student data. Instead of apples and oranges." The quarterly assessments are also used by school faculty to identify weaknesses and intervene with students on challenging concepts.

The instructional support and coaching that ETS provides has two parts. The first is the provision of an item bank, which is aligned to Hawaii state standards and offers a degree of

cohesion to an otherwise fractured state assessment system. The item bank includes standards in language arts, math, and science that teachers can use to identify and address the specific skills students are struggling with. Olson explains, “We’re trying to teach them how best to use data, how to understand data, and how to make decisions using data.” Olson adds that ETS has content specialists and staff that can help teachers with teaching strategies in reading, math, and science.

From an outsider’s perspective, the major elements of the ETS and EdisonLearning strategies seem similar in significant ways.

#### A Closer Look: CAS As Restructuring Provider

While 44 of Hawaii’s 92 schools in restructuring have chosen to work with a comprehensive provider, the remainder are being restructured by their complex area superintendent (CAS). Lea Albert, CAS for the Castle-Kuhuku complex area on the windward shore of Oahu, is one example. Albert relates that she attended the fair organized by the Special Programs Management Section and listened to the various comprehensive providers. But, she says, “I believed that we had the capacity to learn and grow without that.” Restructuring by the CAS often incorporates hiring a services provider, or sometimes several, to address weaknesses in a given school. Under this arrangement, firms like WestEd have provided quarterly assessments and data analysis to schools.

Sheena Alaiasa, principal of King Intermediate School, relates that the school uses math and reading assessments created by Let’s Go Learn. Let’s Go Learn compiles student data and sends it to the school, where the principal and staff members work with WestEd to analyze it and identify weaknesses to be addressed. Alaiasa also works personally with WestEd to learn teaching strategies to share with her faculty. This suggests that the data and instructional

elements are still a central part of pursuing school improvement, but that they are pursued through a less intensive partnership that relies heavily on school-based staff.

CAS Albert points out, “A lot of [what vendors do] is just best practice.” Recognizing this, she continues, “I’m conversant with best practices,” so, if “you attack the areas of need based on your analysis of data...you’re essentially doing the same thing that an outside provider would be doing.” This seems to be largely true about data and curricular and instructional support.

One place where the CAS approach departs significantly from that of the comprehensive providers is the inability to provide the same political cover as an outsider. Given Hawaii’s familial culture, it may be difficult for CASs to force difficult conversations without the buffer of an external provider.

## **Conclusions**

No one should mistake Hawaii’s restructuring model for a wholesale effort to rethink or reinvent these schools. The Hawaii approach does not entail changing staff, reforming governance, redesigning schools, or wholesale state takeovers. Rather, it is an attempt to apply focus, data, and expertise in a challenging state environment by encouraging the use of diverse providers. It remains an open question whether a more intensive or invasive approach might be more effective or how effective these practices would prove in other state environments. Hawaii’s approach nonetheless includes unique elements that offer valuable insights for how external providers can be engaged, utilized, and monitored.

Despite their restructuring efforts and the state’s extra funding, restructuring schools in Hawaii are not gaining ground in comparison to non-restructuring schools. Whatever its particular quirks or limitations, the Hawaii experience can provide guidance to those on the

mainland pursuing similar reforms or facing comparable obstacles. In this closing section, we highlight a set of takeaways for how state and federal policymakers might facilitate effective restructuring.

### Facilitating Restructuring

At least five recommendations for policymakers in Hawaii and on the mainland emerge from this analysis. First, the trust and communication within Hawaii's K-12 community plays a critical role in disseminating information on the quality of different comprehensive providers and encourages providers to take their relationships and reputations seriously. When a provider is performing well in one school, other schools hear about it; the same goes for a provider that is not performing well. Less promisingly, this closed-circle communication may create a bias against outsiders and skepticism toward outside perspectives. Informal methods of communication mean that external management may have difficulty gaining access. In places that lack this strong social network, finding mechanisms to facilitate and promote communication and trust may be critical. States which construct or facilitate more formalized networks will be equipped to benefit from this kind of community.

Second, Hawaii's restructuring efforts today play out in an environment saturated with a focus on data-supported results. Schools and their leaders have a great deal of information on student achievement. They are able to utilize the comprehensive needs assessment to choose providers that are best suited to a school's needs, and there is an acute awareness that all of these services will be assessed by measured performance. The challenge in Hawaii continues to be developing the expertise to effectively use the data that is collected, but the focus on data is a key element.

Third, the presence of a comprehensive provider can often serve to strengthen the hand of school leadership to make difficult decisions. Outside expertise can bring technical acumen, best

practices, and a capacity to collect and utilize data; it can also lend political cover. Political cover creates leverage for leaders to take tough measures and change embedded routines. State school officials should recognize the importance of having a “bad cop” in the school environment able to provide principals with the necessary backing to make unpopular decisions. In Hawaii, this role is commonly filled by the comprehensive providers but the advisory nature of their engagement naturally weakens their hand.

Fourth, Hawaii has created an environment where providers are welcomed, where employing them is made relatively frictionless, and where demands on school personnel are minimized. By addressing procurement and union opposition head-on and at the state level—facilitated by Hawaii’s unique one-district structure—Hawaii has streamlined the hiring process. This creates an environment where the focus is on the value that providers add and their ability to cultivate relationships with school and complex area personnel rather than on quelling union opposition, formal sales forces, or the intricacies of bidding and contracting protocols. Given the high percentage of restructuring schools that have chosen to work with comprehensive providers in Hawaii, this seems to be a useful mechanism for importing expertise.

Finally, centralizing procurement has provided an opportunity for Hawaii to impose quality control over the comprehensive providers contracted to work with restructuring schools. Vetting providers based on the services they offer and—when possible—evidence of a positive track record, provide the state with discretion in who it will recommend to its school personnel. Subsequent meetings with the CAS, the board of education, and the SPMS—in conjunction with quarterly assessments—promote a culture marked by a high degree of attention to results. The ready accessibility of competing providers, whose contracts are also streamlined and have a yearly opportunity to step in, may be critical to this accountability.

## Final Thoughts

The Hawaii approach to restructuring is marked by significant tensions. In opting for a model intended to suit Hawaii's shallow labor pool and non-confrontational culture, the DOE unapologetically rejected a harder-edged approach. This has at least two important implications. One is that it is, very consciously, a consultative model, not a management model. Bringing in comprehensive providers as partners is less threatening to school constituencies; it avoids political conflict and distractions; but it also restricts the ability to control personnel, alter school routines, and play the bad cop role. While perhaps dictated by circumstances particular to Hawaii, this approach has inherent limitations.

A second tension is Hawaii's decision to guide schools to certain ready-to-use providers but not to prohibit schools from using other providers. Indeed, the state's SPMS officials note that they consciously employ a "collegial" strategy when it comes to quality control, with one explaining, "Our job is not to make decisions for the CASs." While the state officials demand performance reports from the comprehensive providers, they indicate they are far more likely to use conversation and education to steer CASs to effective providers rather than seek to shut down existing partnerships. Whether this more genteel approach to diverse providers is an optimal one for other locales, or even whether it was the right choice for Hawaii, is an open question deserving of more careful scrutiny.

Four questions loom for Hawaii and those seeking to learn from Hawaii's experience. First, will Hawaii's collaborative, "soft-edged," restructuring model prove equal to the challenge of dramatically boosting student achievement in persistently low-performing schools or will this model need to be made more aggressive? Second, will providers, who have seen gains in a limited number of locations, enjoy equal progress as they begin to serve more schools? Third, how can Hawaii's experience inform restructuring in other states that rely more on formal

processes or have more decentralized systems of governance? Finally, little research exists on how districts and states are pursuing restructuring or, specifically, on how diverse providers are employed in other environments—how well are various approaches faring? With the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind looming, these questions are ripe for further investigation.

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