



# Hawai'i Scholars for Education and Social Justice

Research Brief #2

February 9, 2020

## Increased Teacher Compensation Can Lead to More Equitable Education in Hawai'i

*Hawai'i needs to recruit and retain more teachers to assure a quality education for all of our 180,000 public school students. The greatest shortages are among teachers of special education, science, mathematics, Hawaiian language immersion and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL).*

While shortages are statewide, some communities are disproportionately affected. These communities are home to higher percentages of Native Hawaiians, Filipino Americans and other Pacific Islanders on the Wai'anae coast of O'ahu; Hana on Maui; Honoka'a, Kealakehe, Konawaena and Kohala on Hawai'i island; and the islands of Lāna'i and Moloka'i. Although the need for qualified teachers has existed for decades, it is exacerbated by an aging and overworked teaching force, as well as declining numbers of individuals who complete a rigorous teacher education program and become educators.

The reasons for the teacher shortage in Hawaii's public schools are numerous and complicated, including systematic discrimination against Hawaiian and other teachers of color.<sup>1,2</sup> Long-term solutions require additional funding as the Hawai'i State Department of Education does not currently have the funds to raise teacher compensation in meaningful ways. Hawai'i continues to rank among the lowest of the fifty states in the percentage of state and local expenditures supporting K-12 education (15.9%), compared to the U.S. average (21.7%).<sup>3</sup> The most recent study on the extent of underfunding of Hawaii's public schools found that the DOE would need an additional \$278 million a year in order to provide an "adequate" education to its students.<sup>4</sup> **Policy makers and educational leaders can change the trajectory of the problem by increasing compensation for existing teachers, particularly those in hard-to-staff areas, and providing incentives for more qualified and culturally diverse people to complete rigorous teacher preparation and receive relevant induction and mentoring support.** The instability

of the teacher workforce perpetuates a revolving door of new teachers, forcing schools to continually invest in efforts to replace teachers who leave, rather than allocate resources towards other needs.

The Hawai'i Scholars for Education and Social

Justice (HSESJ) draw on research in education and related fields to provide facts about the teacher shortage and to dispel misconceptions regarding the effects of increased teacher compensation and incentives for teacher education on teachers, students, and the broader community.

## What We Know About Hawaii's Teacher Shortage and Compensation

*Each year, roughly 1,000 teachers leave their positions in Hawai'i public schools, and these numbers appear to be rising.*<sup>5</sup> Annually, the schools must hire 10% of the teacher workforce. **At the start of the 2018-2019 school year, 1,029 of the 14,437 Hawai'i teacher positions were either filled with non-licensed or emergency hire teachers (49.4%) or left vacant (50.6%).**<sup>6</sup> With a nearly equal number of these cases in elementary and high schools, the shortage can affect more than 60,000 students, one third of our student population.

**When adjusted for the cost-of-living, Hawaii's teachers are the lowest paid in the nation,<sup>7</sup> and Hawai'i ranks as one of the worst states to be a teacher.**<sup>8</sup> A recent study compared Hawai'i teacher salaries with three groups of comparable districts. In all three analyses, Hawaii's teachers were paid between \$3,000 to \$26,000 less, after adjusting for the cost-of-living.<sup>9</sup> Research indicates that when salaries are low, teachers leave for higher paying professions and student performance worsens.<sup>10</sup> The economic costs to our community is high, as nationwide, the average cost of recruiting and training new hires is \$21,000 per teacher.<sup>11,12,13</sup>

**The short-term solution to fill vacancies with non-licensed teachers, including those in "fast-track" teacher education programs like Teach for America (TFA), iTeach, and TeachAway has**

**not worked well.** According to data from the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, fast-track programs often recruit candidates who leave teaching and the islands at a higher rate than local recruits.<sup>14</sup> This is consistent with national data on fast-track programs that show TFA candidates tend to leave after two years.<sup>15</sup> Staffing teacher vacancies with underprepared, non-licensed individuals, including those who are pursuing fast-track teacher education, leads to less student learning and increased teacher turnover.<sup>16</sup> Hiring teachers from a fast-track programs can come with greater upfront costs compared to hiring teachers from rigorous teacher certification programs.<sup>17,18</sup> For example, TFA charges a finder's fee of several thousand dollars for every teacher they supply. Fast-track teachers also require a higher degree of professional support as new teachers, which is one of many hidden costs of such programs. Although, fast track candidates can appeal to administrators who need to fill an immediate vacancy, in the long run these schools end up with more costs and less gains over time.

In the next sections, we discuss common misconceptions about teacher recruitment, compensation, support, and retention. In doing so we provide research evidence that refutes these misunderstandings.

## Misconception #1: People in Hawai'i do not want to be teachers.

Across the nation, there is a decline in the number of students enrolling in teacher education programs.<sup>19</sup> Yet, **in Hawai'i, there is a large and growing pool of people who aspire to become teachers, especially among underrepresented groups.**

### *People in high schools and community colleges.*

Across the State, there are over 120 teaching-focused pathways and academies, and the number of these programs has increased each year.<sup>20</sup> These programs enroll hundreds of high school students, including those at Campbell, Farrington, Kapolei, Leilehua, and Wai'anae High Schools. Many students at these schools identify as Native Hawaiian and Filipino American. For example, the Teacher Academy at Farrington enrolls over 150 students each year.<sup>21</sup> Although all community colleges offer educator preparation programs, only Leeward Community College prepares both elementary and secondary teachers. Currently, Leeward enrolls over 600 students in its education courses. The majority of these students identify as Native Hawaiian (40%) and Filipino American (25%) and live near areas of O'ahu with a high

demand for teachers. Leeward annually matriculates approximately 100 students with degrees and certificates in education. At Leeward, 90% of these students complete two years towards teaching licensure, but only 30% subsequently transfer to four-year institutions.<sup>22</sup>

*University students.* Across the various university-based rigorous teacher education programs there are approximately 1,200 people who are currently working toward a credential in teaching.<sup>23</sup> These numbers indicate a willingness of people in the State to teach.

*Community members.* Another pool of residents who have expressed a desire to become teachers is that of long-term substitute teachers, emergency hires, and others who live in communities where teachers are needed. These individuals have responded to initiatives to become licensed teachers. For example, INPEACE's Kūlia and Ka Lama Education Academy, a community-based "grow your own" program, supports over 400 Wai'anae and Nānākuli residents who have expressed interest in becoming teachers.<sup>24</sup>

## Misconception #2: Increasing teacher compensation will not affect teacher recruitment and retention.

*Teachers often leave the field.* Nationwide, teachers leave schools or the field altogether for a variety of reasons, including low salaries, poor and unsafe facilities, large class sizes, an unsupportive administration, insufficient resources for students, long commute times, and lack of input on school-

wide decisions.<sup>25</sup> Salaries are as important to teachers as they are to professionals in other occupations.<sup>26</sup> Specifically, **higher teacher compensation attracts more qualified teacher applicants, influences teachers' career aspirations, and enhances teachers' commitment to their jobs.**<sup>27</sup>

*Effects of raising compensation.* Raising teacher salaries can improve a school's attractiveness within the local labor market,<sup>28</sup> thereby improving the status of teaching as a profession. Better paid opportunities for teachers appear to be the most influential in schools with high-poverty rates, low test scores, and ongoing teacher turnover.<sup>29</sup>

**Research suggests that a 25-40% increase in teacher compensation can improve recruitment and retention of well-prepared and motivated teachers.**<sup>30</sup> In the State of Hawai'i, overall compensation for teachers may be increased by offering housing incentives, such that teachers receive financial support for housing expenses, including rent and relocation, as well as discounted homes and subsidized teacher housing. The effects of increased compensation are the strongest at the beginning of a teacher's career;<sup>31</sup> however, the effects of compensation on teacher retention persist among more experienced teachers, as well.<sup>32</sup>

*High demand fields.* Teachers in high demand fields, such as mathematics, science, special education, and ESL are especially vulnerable to salary differences that affect their decisions to stay in the profession, given much higher salaries in alternative occupations for individuals with their expertise.<sup>33</sup> A recent study analyzed differences between states with the highest and lowest shortages in special education.<sup>34</sup> Researchers identified Hawai'i as one of the states having the greatest shortages of special education teachers in the nation. The research revealed that states with higher salaries for special education teachers did not have such significant shortages. The compounding variables of Hawaii's teachers being the lowest paid in the nation, *and* not offering financial incentives to a high-need discipline like special education, makes it particularly difficult to recruit in this field. The recent increase in Hawaii's special educator salaries improves this situation, as compensating teachers in areas in which they are needed is related to retaining those teachers.

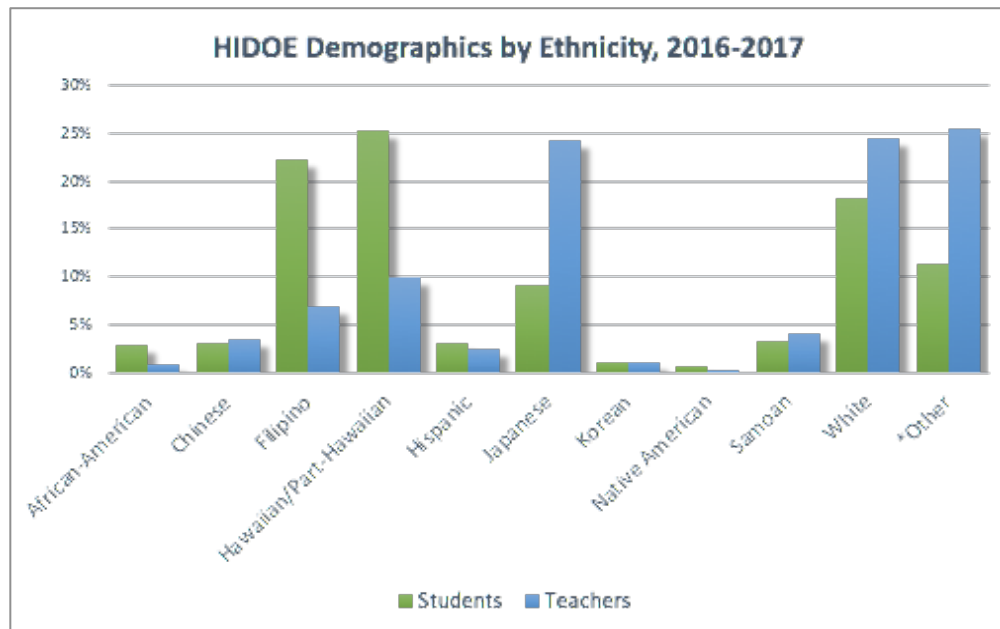
### Misconception #3: Increasing teacher compensation will not affect student outcomes.

*Increased teacher salaries improve student learning.* Teacher salaries are related to students' learning. A recent international analysis of teacher salaries in 31 countries, including the U.S., showed that higher salaries attracted and retained more capable and well-prepared teachers, which in turn had a positive effect on students' school performance.<sup>35</sup> Research indicates that teacher salaries affect students' math achievement scores, even after controlling for students' background characteristics such as their families' income.<sup>36</sup> As noted above, increasing teacher salaries can lead to qualified teachers staying in their positions,<sup>37</sup> and this improves student achievement through higher student retention rates.<sup>38</sup> One study found that

raising teacher salaries by 10% was related to a 3-4% decrease in high school dropout rates.<sup>39</sup> Having a knowledgeable, well-prepared and experienced teacher is the most significant school factor related to student achievement.<sup>40</sup> **Teachers have 2-3 times more influence on students' math and reading test scores than other school factors, including facilities, services, and leadership.**<sup>41</sup> In addition to directly affecting their own students' learning, well-prepared teachers have an indirect impact on a broader population of learners when their students become peers to other students in future classes.<sup>42</sup>

*Teachers should mirror student ethnicities.* More teachers are needed in Hawai‘i schools, but there is a particular shortage of teachers who come from the same ethnic backgrounds as the students they serve. **When teachers are the same race or ethnicity as their students, learners display higher academic**

**outcomes, specifically in math and reading, when compared to students taught by teachers from a different racial or ethnic background.**<sup>43,44,45,46</sup> Over half of all students in Hawai‘i public schools are Native Hawaiian or Filipino American, yet these groups make up only 16% of the teaching force.<sup>47</sup>



Teachers who are from the same race or ethnicity serve as role models for students.<sup>48</sup> They model for students that people “like them” can do well in school, go to college, and have many options in life.<sup>49,50</sup> The presence of these teachers counter stereotypes presented in the media and broader community about the groups they and the students represent.<sup>51</sup> Research reveals that **teachers from the same ethnicity as their students are more likely to have a better understanding of their students’ culture-based learning styles and needs** than teachers who differ ethnically from their students.<sup>52,53,54</sup> The cultural fit between students and teachers enhances students’ experiences and well-being and increases feelings of belonging. When students and teachers share ethnic or racial backgrounds, students tend to report feeling more cared for and receiving more social-emotional support and confirmation than students whose

teachers are from different backgrounds.<sup>55,56,57</sup> Students also rate their teachers more favorably when they share the same background.<sup>58</sup> A large longitudinal study of students in grades K-5 found that students with a teacher from a different race had more unexcused absences and were more likely to be chronically absent than students with same-race teachers.<sup>59</sup> Boys of color were particularly vulnerable in this regard. If they had a White teacher, these boys were more likely to be chronically absent and to be suspended. While student-teacher race matching is not a requirement for cultural understanding or student success, students should have the opportunity throughout their K-12 education to learn from a teacher who represents and understands their cultures. Federal policy recognizes that **all students can benefit from a more diverse teacher workforce.**<sup>60,61</sup>

*Financial support can increase the number of teachers of color. Students of color often do not choose teacher education because of (a) the field's low salaries; (b) their families often already struggle financially; and (c) the potential debt they will incur in a teacher preparation program.*<sup>62,63,64</sup> Compared to White peers, students of color have more college debt. The amount of debt for students of color, as well as the debt gap between White and non-White students, grows across time.<sup>65</sup> Students may also be dissuaded from teacher education because they are unable to forego the income of their part- or full-time jobs during student teaching. Targeted compensation for teacher candidates from Native Hawaiian, Filipino American, and other underrepresented backgrounds to complete rigorous teacher education programs

could promote students from these groups becoming teachers.

*Partnership pathways into teaching are needed.* Creation of pathways into the teaching profession can assist local students to become teachers.<sup>66</sup> Partnerships among high schools, community colleges, universities, and schools where teachers are needed, can create bridges of support for teacher candidates from Native Hawaiian, Filipino American and other underrepresented backgrounds. Such programs encourage high school students of color to become teachers.<sup>67,68</sup> More funding is needed for programs that prepare teachers from local communities to become a new generation of diverse, community-responsive educators who understand and meet the needs of all students, including multilingual learners and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.<sup>69,70</sup>

## Misconception #4: Supporting students to complete rigorous teacher education will not improve the teacher shortage.

*Benefits of rigorous teacher education.* Motivating students to choose teaching as a career and preparing teachers to meet the needs of a diverse student population starts with effective and comprehensive teacher education. Research suggests that **rigorous, university-based preparation of teachers enhances teachers' self-efficacy and performance, thereby improving student outcomes.**<sup>71,72</sup> Rigorous teacher preparation requires many hours of supervised clinical practice in classrooms,<sup>73</sup> and candidates learn to provide culturally relevant and engaging curricula that builds on students' assets and supports students' identity development and learning.<sup>74</sup>

*Fast-track teachers are less prepared.* Teachers who complete fast-track teacher licensure programs receive less comprehensive coursework and student teaching. Fast-track models of teacher preparation

do not take into account the differences between teaching fields or the differences between states and communities. Additionally, teacher candidates from fast-track programs display lower levels of instructional knowledge and are less confident in their teaching abilities and skills than those who received rigorous preparation within a four- or five-year university-based accredited program.<sup>75,76,77</sup> A recent study in the field of special education found that fast-track completers felt less prepared to teach core academic content (e.g., science, math, social studies, history) and communicated the need for additional coursework to work with students with disabilities.<sup>78</sup> Compared to teachers who completed rigorous teacher preparation programs, the fast-track teachers were also more likely to experience daily classroom management problems.<sup>79</sup> These findings have consequences for teacher retention and student learning.

*Fast-track teachers leave schools faster.* **Teachers who complete fast-track teacher education are 2-3 times more likely to leave their schools than those who received rigorous, university-based teacher preparation.**<sup>80,81,82</sup> As teacher candidates of color often do not have the funds to enroll in a comprehensive, university-based licensure program, their enrollment in fast-track programs is increasing.<sup>83</sup> However, a large scale, nationwide study of TFA teacher outcomes showed that more than half (56%) of TFA teachers left their

initial placements in low-income schools after two years of teaching.<sup>84</sup> By their fifth year, only 15% continued to teach in the same school to which they were originally assigned. Although teachers who complete fast-track programs tend to work in rural and hard-to-staff schools, they are also less prepared to teach in classrooms where students are struggling,<sup>85</sup> perpetuating the teacher turn-over and low student achievement at those schools.

## Misconception #5: Once people become teachers, they no longer need support to stay in their positions.

*Induction and mentoring to support teachers.* Once new teachers arrive at school, they need continuing professional development and support to sustain their work. **Research indicates that providing high-quality induction and mentoring is one of the most effective ways to advance teacher retention, satisfaction, and performance.**<sup>86</sup> The costs needed to support induction programs could be offset by the savings achieved through decreases in the costs of turnover.<sup>87</sup>

*Sustained and culturally-responsive support.* New teachers need sustained support and professional and cultural guidance in their first years of teaching. Connecting beginning teachers with experienced teachers who instruct the same subjects reduces teacher attrition rates by more than two-thirds.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, place-based induction and mentoring fosters beginning teachers' understanding of local communities and the needs of students in Hawai'i's schools.<sup>89</sup> Mentorship assists new teachers in learning about their schools' cultures and routines as well as students' diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, all of which results in more student centered, culturally responsive instruction.<sup>90</sup>

Further, this knowledge enhances teachers' pedagogical practices and self-efficacy, which in turn positively influences student achievement.<sup>91</sup> In short, place-based induction and mentoring improves teacher performance and retention, as well as student learning.<sup>92,93</sup>

*Decrease teacher turnover.* Research suggests that induction and mentoring is especially effective in schools with high teacher turnover rates and low student achievement.<sup>94</sup> It is more effective when teachers feel empowered and there are sufficient resources for comprehensive support of new teachers.<sup>95</sup> Support and mentoring works well when schools provide joint release time for new teachers and their mentors<sup>96</sup> and when school leaders provide monitoring and feedback of new teachers and have frequent discussions with them.<sup>97</sup>

Locally, individuals who were **former teachers in Hawai'i public schools reported that improved working conditions and professional development, along with higher pay, would have influenced their decision to stay in Hawai'i.**<sup>98</sup> To retain teachers, State policies should align with national criteria for induction and mentoring and require all new teachers' participation.<sup>99</sup>

## *Conclusion*

Public education is a right enshrined within the State of Hawai'i Constitution. The quality of public education, and indeed Hawaii's future, is dependent upon how well the State supports the current education system. The status quo results in academic and economic disparities, with the greatest impacts on Native Hawaiian, Filipino American, and other Pacific Islander families living in rural and low-income areas. The data presented in this research brief make a strong case for increasing teachers' compensation, recruiting and supporting more local teacher candidates, and retaining public school teachers, thereby, improving learning for all of Hawaii's students.



**HSESJ recommends the following public policies:**

- 1. Increase all teacher salaries in accordance with Hawaii's cost of living.** Additional increases should be given to teachers in hard-to-staff locations and specialties (e.g., special education, math, science, Hawaiian language immersion, and ESL).
- 2. Offer affordable housing for teachers.** Hawai'i needs to ensure that teachers do not leave the profession or the State due to high housing costs. Affordable housing options need to be more robust than housing stipends, low-interest loans, or assistance with down-payments, as these options only amplify economic disparities by allowing more people into a high-cost market rather than addressing the rising cost of homes. HSESJ recommends rent caps and control, as well as additional support for the Rental Housing Trust Fund.
- 3. Provide greater financial support to low-income and underrepresented students aspiring to become teachers by offering tuition assistance and living stipends.** A large pool of people in Hawai'i have expressed interest in teaching, including high school and community college students from Native Hawaiian and Filipino American backgrounds. HSESJ recommends providing funding for these individuals to complete rigorous teacher education programs. In addition, funding is needed to support teacher candidates from underrepresented groups during student teaching, when they are advised to not have another job.
- 4. Strengthen and develop more partnerships among high schools, community colleges, universities, and the communities in which teachers are needed.** In order to support students' pathways to become teachers, partnerships are needed that bridge rigorous, university-based teacher education programs with high schools and community colleges where students interested in the teaching profession have been identified. Programs that offer sustained financial support, academic guidance, and professional collaboration between high school, community college, university teacher preparation pathways, and communities help students stay on track to become teachers.
- 5. Support and reward induction and mentoring of all new teachers** from mentors in the same content areas. Induction activities should focus on learning about the school culture and routines and gaining an understanding of the diverse backgrounds and assets of their students. Mentoring should involve frequent monitoring, feedback, and discussion. Mentors should be adequately compensated for their time.
- 6. Provide more funding for these initiatives.** The Department of Education is chronically underfunded and does not currently have enough funds to provide the types of support suggested in this brief. More funds are needed to improve the conditions of teachers in ways that will improve teacher recruitment and retention.

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This briefing paper was prepared by Michael Cawdery, Janet Kim, Jonathan Okamura, Colleen Rost-Banik, Lois Yamauchi, and Klavdija Zorec.

Hawai'i Scholars for Education and Social Justice (HSESJ) is a volunteer group of researchers in Hawai'i who conducts, reviews, and disseminates research related to education and social justice in Hawai'i. Our goal is to use research to promote dialogue and create an informed consciousness about public education in our State. We partner with educators, educational groups, and non-profit organizations. **If you are interested in learning more or becoming involved, please email [Infohsesj@gmail.com](mailto:Infohsesj@gmail.com).**

Our educational researchers are available for comment and discussion on topics raised in this research brief.

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