

### Alignment for Change in Hawaii

**“I don’t think that would work too well here; we’re pretty unique.”** Authorizers around the country have said this since the first authorizing shop opened in Minnesota in 1992. Sometimes, the concern is well-founded. Not every problem demands an identical solution.

But as the charter school sector expands and matures, the database of what’s needed and what works grows more robust. Certain patterns have emerged and NACSA is paying close attention to them.

This case study is one in a series that explores local progress on charter school authorizing in various corners of our country. We’ll dig into what was needed, how it happened, and why it matters to the ultimate quest we all share: creating and sustaining great public schools for all U.S. children.

The series starts in our nation’s most far-flung locale: Hawaii. If ever there was a place that can legitimately be called “unique,” this is it. And yet, a prominent charter school leader there says it plainly: “I’m amazed at the commonality of problems: they’re always the same wherever you go. Our problems are your problems. Hawaii can be a model for what can happen in other states.”

### Essential Facts

- 1 Charter schools in Hawaii** were long on autonomy and short on accountability.
- 2 News reports of nepotism** were underlined by state audit findings of lack of authorizer oversight, incomplete or misleading performance reporting, and unethical and illegal financial and employment practices.
- 3 NACSA’s authorizer evaluation** detailed the need for changes.
- 4 A state legislative task force** gathered all the evidence and, with support from NACSA and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, proposed legislative and policy changes to create a new governance structure for Hawaii charter schools.
- 5 A new charter school law passed**, establishing the Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission as the new authorizing body, appointed by the state Board of Education.
- 6 NACSA was hired** to serve as Transition Coordinator to implement the requirements of the new law on behalf of the Board and the Commission.
- 7 Charter schools individually** and through the Hawaii Public Charter School Network provided input and expertise at each step in the policy and practice change process.
- 8 An accountability system was created**, including a charter contract template, an organizational performance framework, a financial performance framework, an academic performance framework draft, recommendations for contract terms, and Commission policies and protocols.
- 9 New contracts were signed** with each school that reflect these new accountability measures.



**The Goal:** To transition Hawaii’s charter school system to one that meets or exceeds NACSA’s *Principles & Standards* and that serves as a model for future authorizers in Hawaii and throughout the U.S.

**The Result:** All charter schools in Hawaii, for the first time in history, have clearer expectations through performance contracts and transparent systems of autonomy and accountability.

## Welcome to Hawaii

### Hawaii Charter School Sector Snapshot

**1** authorizer      **32** schools (OF MORE THAN 280 IN STATE)      **9,500** students (OF 183,000 IN STATE)

Let’s start with some features that actually are unique to Hawaii:

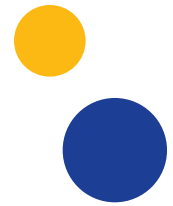
- The Hawaiian Islands are the most isolated, inhabited pieces of land in the world.
- Hawaii has the oldest public school system west of the Mississippi, founded by King Kamehameha III in 1840.
- Hawaii is the only state in the nation with a single, statewide school district spread across seven islands controlled by a single board of education.
- Hawaiian is the state’s second official language; the state constitution calls for a “Hawaiian education program consisting of language, culture, and history in the public schools.”

Hawaii passed their first charter school legislation in 1994 and has one authorizer—currently, the newly appointed Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission. Their portfolio of 32 schools serves more than 9,500 students—or five percent of the state’s total public school population of approximately 183,000 students who attend more than 280 schools.

One of these charter schools serves as an example of the unique ways of educating students in Hawaii: The West Hawaii Explorations Academy (WHEA) is 75 yards from the ocean, where a shark pool is cut into the lava rock. Students conduct large-scale, long-term, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) projects in the outdoor, hands-on laboratory. Using condensation from pipes at an adjacent deep-sea scientific research facility, students grow strawberries in the very dry climate. The nationally recognized school is lauded for its academically rigorous and deeply innovative curriculum (see this *Edutopia* [video](#) to learn more).

What’s not unique to Hawaii is this: all charters, like all public schools—however unique or traditional their curriculum may be—must be held to high performance standards. WHEA meets high standards and has a solid track record of success. It consistently ranks among Hawaii’s highest performing public secondary schools on the Hawaii State Assessment. The school was the first Hawaii start-up charter to gain full accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and in May 2011, was reaccruited for a six-year term, the longest period attainable through WASC.

## Who's Who in Hawaii



Who They Are	What They Do (or Did)
<a href="#"><u>Charter School Governance, Accountability, and Authority Task Force (or “the task force”)</u></a>	<p>Established in 2011 by Legislative Act 130, the task force was convened by Hawaii State Senator Jill Tokuda and met for six months. They provided clarity as to the relationships, responsibilities, and the lines of accountability and authority among stakeholders in Hawaii’s charter school system. With support and input from NACSA and the National Governors Association, and with the model law put forth by the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools as a guide, they compiled recommendations for the legislature, which resulted in Act 130, passed in spring 2012.</p>
<a href="#"><u>State Public Charter School Commission (or “the Commission”)</u></a>	<p>The Commission is the state’s sole charter school authorizing agency established by Hawaii’s new charter school law (Act 130) in 2012. They are responsible for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Setting high standards and making thoughtful decisions about which charters to approve and renew.</li> <li>2. Ensuring that charter schools have the autonomy they need to innovate and be successful.</li> <li>3. Holding schools accountable by monitoring charter school performance to ensure that each school is meeting or exceeding expectations and is educating children well.</li> </ol> <p>The Commission provides oversight for the charter school governing boards.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Hawaii Board of Education (the “Board” or “BOE”)</u></a>	<p>The BOE formulates policy and oversees both the state Department of Education (DOE) and the State Public Charter School Commission. The Board has nine members appointed by the governor and one nonvoting student representative selected by the state student council and one nonvoting military representative selected by the senior military commander. The BOE hires the superintendent, the chief executive officer of the public school system.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Hawaii State Department of Education (or “DOE”)</u></a>	<p>The DOE is Hawaii’s State Education Agency and sole Local Education Agency, and, as such, is responsible for special education, federal reporting, and many federal funds. The superintendent appoints six assistant superintendents to run state-level offices responsible for curriculum, instruction, and student support; human resources; business services; and information technology services.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Transition Coordinator: National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA)</u></a>	<p>NACSA provides training, consulting, and policy guidance to authorizing offices and other entities focused on quality authorizing of charter schools. It also advocates for laws and policies that raise the bar for excellence among authorizers and the schools they charter. NACSA was hired as Transition Coordinator to help the Commission develop its organizational and staffing structure, as well as to develop a charter contract and performance framework consistent with the requirements of Hawaii’s new charter law.</p>
<a href="#"><u>Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network (“the Network”)</u></a>	<p>The Network advocates for and supports quality public charter schools in Hawaii. They aim to enable, support, and unify charter schools and the charter school sector in Hawaii. Activities include linking Hawaii’s charter schools to each other and to charter efforts in other states; providing information and services to schools and individuals interested in establishing or improving the performance of Hawaii charter schools; promoting and conducting research on educational reform; serving as a “vendor” for services needed by charter schools; and promoting partnerships with businesses and organizations for both the Network and its member schools.</p>
<b>Charter School Governing Boards</b>	<p>Governing Boards serve as the governing bodies of the charter schools and are accountable to the Commission.</p>
<b>Charter School Review Panel (or “CSRP”)</b>	<p>The CSRP served as the previous charter school authorizer. In summer 2011, NACSA worked with CSRP to conduct a comprehensive authorizer evaluation to assess the capacity, effectiveness, and sharing roles of the CSRP, the CSAO (see below), and the BOE. The CSRP was replaced by the Commission.</p>
<b>Charter School Administrative Office (or “CSAO”)</b>	<p>The CSAO was the state office responsible for the organization, operation, and management of Hawaii’s charter school system from 2009-2012. It provided advocacy, support, and guidance to charter schools and to prospective charter school applicants. The CSAO was attached to the DOE for administrative purposes only. According to Act 130, the CSAO was the designated staff of the Commission during the transition year (2012-13) until it was dissolved on June 30, 2013.</p>

## Changes Needed

The school, however, like many other charters in Hawaii, has succeeded *despite* a charter school authorizing environment that for years lacked sufficient resources, consistent structures, and strong legislative grounding. The shortcomings were documented in a state audit report released in late 2011, which heaped criticism on a charter school system already well aware of its failings.

The report's<sup>1</sup> subtitle, *Hawai'i Charter Schools: Autonomy Without Accountability*, encapsulated the auditor's concerns: unethical and illegal spending of public funds and no outside oversight. Details included student performance reports where key data was omitted or presented in misleading ways; misreported enrollment figures; and unethical and illegal school spending and employment practices.

The audit was preceded in early 2011 by a series of news accounts of nepotism. These distressing stories had prompted the Hawaii Legislature to create a task force, led by State Senator Jill Tokuda, charged with taking a hard look at the existing system. When the audit was released, the task force was already six months into a rigorous process to overhaul and improve charter school authorizing.

### Out of balance

"Historically, Hawaii has been very strong on granting autonomy to charter schools," explains Senator Tokuda, who sponsored the legislation that created the state's new charter school accountability structure. She posits that this autonomy has helped charter schools initiate innovative approaches to teaching, in particular the Hawaiian-Focused (HF) schools, which are more than one-half of the state's portfolio. Their curricular models range from culture-based to full Hawaiian language immersion. Statistically, Hawaiian students have been among the lowest performing groups in the state, so many HF schools are providing services to a high-need population.

"Where we fell short was on accountability," Senator Tokuda emphasizes. "We understood the importance of having both autonomy and accountability focused on increasing student achievement, but we realized we were out of balance," she continues. "We needed to hold our schools accountable for their academic, financial, and organizational performance. That was our goal."

Other leaders in Hawaii echoed this. Don Horner, the state Board of Education chair, describes it this way: "The charter school law for 20 years was more aspirational than operational, with noble intent but vague in some important areas. It was time to make some lasting changes."

Senator Tokuda convened the *Charter School Governance, Accountability, and Authority Task Force* in summer 2011. Guided by the equation  $\text{Autonomy} + \text{Accountability} = \text{Increased Student Achievement}$ , the task force worked to provide clarity for the relationships, responsibilities, and lines of accountability and authority among stakeholders in Hawaii's charter school system. NACSA became an active participant in their work, as did the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

### Untenable situation

Concurrent with these developments, Hawaii leaders had connected with NACSA at a National Governors' Association (NGA) conference. "We had some resources to conduct authorizer evaluations," recalls Greg Richmond, NACSA's president, "so we worked with Hawaii over the next six months, evaluating the authorizer

<sup>1</sup> Performance Audit of the Hawai'i Public Charter School System: A Report to the Governor and the Legislature of the State of Hawai'i, December 2011, <http://hawaii.gov/auditor/Reports/2011/11-03.pdf>

at that time—the Charter School Review Panel (CSRP)—and participating in the task force chaired by Senator Tokuda.”

Richmond describes the increasingly untenable situation: “The CSRP knew they were falling short of what was needed. This was an all-volunteer group trying to complete enormous amounts of work with no professional staff and yet dealing with all the requirements of transparency placed upon them as a public body.”

## Alignment for change

Every state with charter schools has its unique quirks, and Hawaii is no exception. “But often the common denominator,” Richmond points out, “is people using that assertion of ‘uniqueness’ to enable and continue dysfunction. Here’s where Hawaii stands out as a place to learn from: leaders were willing to make the difficult political decisions to actually fix the mess.”

So, by the end of 2011, the alignment for real change was striking: a series of policy changes pointed to by the audit report, asked for by the legislature, demanded by the state Board, and recommended by NACSA.

Still, it was the involvement of the charter schools themselves and cooperation with the Hawaii Public Charter Schools Network which ultimately ensured success. The solutions created reflected both best practice charter school policy and smart practice charter school reality. Today, these new policies are ready to be applied in real time, in real classrooms, to ensure real student progress.

**“We understood the importance of having both autonomy and accountability focused on increasing student achievement, but we realized we were out of balance. We needed to hold our schools accountable for their academic, financial, and organizational performance. That was our goal.”**

– STATE SENATOR JILL TOKUDA

## Changes Made

### Retrofit solution, not another short-term fix

Some states just now implementing charter schools, such as the state of Washington, have the benefit of all the lessons learned to date. Hawaii’s challenge, faced by many other states with various iterations of previous charter laws, was to find a retrofit solution. “Leaders there were determined to get it right,” recalls William Haft, NACSA’s vice president of authorizer development. “After multiple short-term fixes over a series of years, there were still weaknesses in the law, and that created gaps in the accountability system.”

The fixes were made over a total of more than two years through a combination of policy and practice solutions that retrofitted a once-problematic system. Through participation on Senator Tokuda’s task force, NACSA provided policy recommendations that reflected best practice around the country.

The outcome of this hands-on work by many local stakeholders, with support from national groups including NACSA and NGA, was a new charter school law (which adopted the recommendations of the task force), a new authorizer, new performance frameworks, and a new charter contract.

## Solid governance structure

Passed in spring 2012, Act 130 created a solid governance structure for Hawaii’s charter school system, with clear lines of authority and accountability.<sup>2</sup> This act established the Hawaii Public Charter School Commission as the authorizing agency. It also required charter school performance contracts that provided for clear financial, organizational, and academic accountability.<sup>3</sup>

### NACSA’s Transition Coordinator Responsibilities

- Craft a staffing plan and budget for Commission
- Hire first executive director
- Recommend application decisions based on high-quality review process
- Develop the Commission’s accountability system including:
  - » administrative rules
  - » a charter contract template
  - » an Organizational Performance Framework
  - » a Financial Performance Framework
  - » an Academic Performance Framework draft
  - » recommendations for contract terms
  - » Commission policies and protocols, including renewal and closure protocols

NACSA has served as Transition Coordinator<sup>4</sup> since summer 2012, implementing the requirements of the new legislation on behalf of the Board of Education and the Commission. Working with charter school operators, other community stakeholders, and the Commission, NACSA has guided the development of new accountability measures. Other highlights of NACSA’s transition role include developing a staffing plan, submitting a state Board-approved budget, developing rules and policies, and running a rigorous process to review the first round of charter applications. The Commission also hired its first executive director ahead of schedule.

## Capacity and expertise for application review

Previously, the Charter School Review Panel’s volunteer board members themselves had to manage the application process—from reviewing documents, to conducting interviews, to making decisions. For 2012, NACSA led the process in conjunction with Charter School Administrative Office (CSAO) staff.<sup>5</sup> Local and national experts were brought in to review the applications and conduct interviews, and then NACSA presented recommendations to the Commission. With new capacity to handle the demanding logistics, staff could also ensure the necessary expertise to review applications, conduct interviews, and make recommendations.

## A new contract

In March 2013, the Commission approved a new charter contract with accountability measures for financial and organizational performance for all Hawaii charter schools. The contract also clarifies the charter schools’ participation in the state’s academic accountability system for all public schools, while leaving flexibility to determine the final specifics now that Hawaii’s ESEA Flex Request<sup>6</sup> has been approved. As of this writing, NACSA is revising a draft academic performance framework to align with Hawaii’s new state accountability system, “Strive HI.”

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see sidebar “Who’s Who in Hawaii” on page 3.

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see sidebar “Hawaii’s Charter School Performance Frameworks” on page 7.

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see sidebar “NACSA’s Transition Coordinator Responsibilities” on page 6.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on CSAO, see sidebar “Who’s Who in Hawaii” on page 3.

<sup>6</sup> ESEA Flex Request refers to a waiver request made to the U.S. Department of Education to gain relief from accountability provisions under the No Child Left Behind Act.

# Hawaii's Charter School Performance Frameworks

Category	Description
<b>Organizational Performance Framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved by the Commission in March 2013</li> <li>• Based on NACSA's national models</li> <li>• Modified through multiple rounds of revisions based on feedback from charter schools, the Network, and the Commission</li> </ul>
<b>Financial Performance Framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approved by the Commission in March 2013</li> <li>• Based on NACSA's national models</li> <li>• Modified through multiple rounds of revisions based on feedback from charter schools, the Network, and the Commission</li> <li>• Has gone through two "trial runs" to test appropriateness of the metrics and targets based on 2008-2012 audit data for each school to ensure alignment with the Hawaii school funding system</li> </ul>
<b>Academic Performance Framework</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language providing for academic accountability is part of charter contract approved by the Commission in March 2013</li> <li>• Aligns with the state's accountability system</li> <li>• Provides schools an opportunity to propose school-specific measures consistent with the requirements of Act 130</li> <li>• Drafted by NACSA based on Hawaii's ESEA Flex Request as submitted in fall 2012</li> <li>• Used in a trial run conducted by NACSA based on available performance data</li> <li>• Being revised based on the recent approval of Hawaii's ESEA Flex Request</li> </ul>

“We’ve done this major shift,” says Hawaii Public Charter School Network Director Lynn Finnegan, “and now in the second year of implementation, we’re following through with the contract. There’s lots of work to do.” After signing one-year contracts with each school starting July 1, 2013, the Commission is fine-tuning and implementing the performance frameworks, renewal and closure protocols, and mechanisms to communicate with charter schools.

## The right direction

How do we know this work is going in the right direction? One way is to compare Hawaii today to the state of things only a couple of years ago.

“The reputation of charter schools was being tarnished by their overall lack of transparency and oversight,” describes Don Horner, chair of the state Board of Education, “plus a few schools not doing what they were supposed to be doing. After 20 years of charter schools, there are still fewer than 10,000 children attending them, which are only about five percent of all students in Hawaii public schools.”

But Horner thinks that could change, and welcomes it. The state Board of Education sees charters as a complement, not competition, to their non-charter schools. “Our goal is to give the public choice, but with choice comes responsibility,” Horner says.

“Act 130 cleared up the ambiguity,” Horner states. “To be successful, these schools need autonomy. But to be funded and respected—and to define if autonomy is working—they need accountability. It’s not an easy task, since you don’t want to go too far in either direction,” he stresses.

## Lessons Learned

### Policy, practice, and, most importantly, people

Hawaii achieved these bold outcomes by making and keeping commitments to have all stakeholders at the table. “As we worked to create some new and very clear rules of the game, we wanted policymakers to be influenced by what’s actually occurring in schools,” describes Lynn Finnegan. “We were determined to bridge the gap.”

The Hawaii Public Charter School Network themselves served as a conduit between the policy process and the charter schools, via regional meetings, webinars, conference calls, and other gatherings to provide input. “The schools wanted to help achieve that balance between minimal requirements and certain expectations for outcomes so that the rest could be protected as autonomous space. Change causes anxiety, but as school leaders saw that their suggestions were actually being considered and adopted,” Finnegan remembers, “trust was built. That will serve us and our students going forward.”

### National expert + on-the-ground resource = a new way of working

In addition to NACSA staff presence at key junctures, NACSA hired a local expert in governmental affairs, Dede Mamiya, to be the on-the-ground project manager. Senator Tokuda describes how the element of human touch was central to this process. “Face-to-face engagement is critical. People like to have someone come to them, not just be given a survey or talked to on the phone. That human element as part of community engagement, from an education reform standpoint, is practically a requirement—especially if you’re trying to do something new or controversial,” she explains.

She describes NACSA as a critical partner. “They brought knowledge and experience to the table. But they were more than a resource; they wanted to see us succeed. It became a natural fit for them to be part of implementing the transition. NACSA is very much a part of our charter family here in Hawaii. The law, frameworks, the contracts are their baby as much as ours.”

Tokuda says this way of working is now a recommendation for others undergoing change. “We’ve already recommended to another state department that they do the exact same thing: contract with a national organization with the needed expertise and process know-how and then have a local point of implementation to make and maintain relationships.”

### “The genius of the AND”

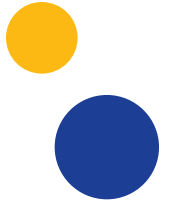
Karen Street, chair of the Hawaii Public Charter School Commission, says it is her job is “to foster a productive group dynamic, despite the diversity of opinions.” She references a best-selling business book, *Built to Last*<sup>7</sup>, which positions this diversity of opinions as an asset, not a hassle. “In this book, ‘the genius of the AND’—where there is room for various perspectives—is contrasted with ‘the tyranny of the OR’—where groups are forced to choose one limited direction. The ‘AND’ is the best and most rewarding work. But it means welcoming disagreement and allowing new ideas at the table.”

“The genius of the AND” meant crafting an academic accountability framework that aligns with the state’s accountability system AND also provides schools an opportunity to propose school-specific measures consistent with the requirements of Act 130. The financial performance framework also reflects this philosophy by requiring certain metrics AND allowing the authorizer to review the specific data behind what could be a misleading negative metric.

<sup>7</sup> Business bestseller by James C. Collins and Jerry I. Porras



Street describes NACSA's contributions from that perspective: more *AND* than *OR*. "They kick-started us. There were moments when NACSA listened to and incorporated our feedback on why something that works on the mainland might not here in Hawaii," she remembers. "There were also moments when they rightly stood firm on the non-negotiables and reminded us that good school governance is much the same wherever you are," Street recalls. "Ultimately, there was room for both these viewpoints."



## Looking Ahead

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools recently raised its national ranking of Hawaii's charter school law from 35th to 14th place—the greatest gain made by any state from 2012 to 2013.

Of course, a good law is just the beginning. NACSA's William Haft, who managed NACSA's efforts in Hawaii, emphasizes the work ahead. "All these changes give Hawaii the capacity to take the reins," he asserts, "but much work still lies ahead to implement these changes effectively." It will still be a year or two until the new authorizer, the Commission, makes decisions on school renewals and closures. Meanwhile, the Commission has signed contracts with the 32 existing schools. Newly-approved schools will be governed by these contracts from day one of approval.

### Herding cats; building trust

As that law gets applied and schools get used to these performance standards, the hope is that the schools will be in a stronger position to say, "You can trust us and we have the goods to prove why." Senator Tokuda knows that only then will legislators and the public truly believe in charter schools' accountability. "Trust cannot be legislated," she states, "it can only be earned."

In turn, that public trust will form the foundation to tackle future challenges. "Now that there is a stronger governance and accountability framework in place, we are ready to take on even tougher issues like per-pupil funding, facilities, and collective bargaining," asserts Tokuda.

Funding for facilities is now the biggest need, according to a number of leaders. "Charter schools will be held accountable for the outcomes in these new contracts," state Board Chair Horner states, "and then it's our job to get them more resources to uphold their commitments. Our average school building is 65 years old. How do we utilize our limited resources to tackle that issue?"

Long-time charter school leader Curtis Muraoka, co-director of WHEA (West Hawaii Explorations Academy), echoes the concern about facilities funding. His school has survived through creative use of existing buildings and frugal money management, but they actually have to cancel school when it rains due to insufficient structures for students to learn indoors. "Hawaii's constitution calls for a system of public schools including *'other educational institutions as may be deemed desirable, including physical facilities therefor.'* WHEA is almost 20 years old. In our 13 years as a charter, our students received general fund support, but zero dollars for facilities. Equity should be for all, not some—or it's not equity," he emphasizes.

While Muraoka—also a member of the Commission—remains concerned about adequate funding, he is pleased by progress so far in other areas. "Unlike the mainland, Hawaii charter schools are, by and large, community-based, mom-and-pop models," he describes. "It's the herding cat syndrome: creating systems that work for 30-plus independent schools is hard. But the process was fair and transparent, logical and reasonable. People felt listened to. That builds trust on the part of school operators. And the performance frameworks are building trust with the legislature."



**“Charter schools are test beds for new ways of innovating in all public schools. We want to serve as demonstration sites for things that can work in all education sectors of Hawaii, and beyond.”** – LYNN FINNEGAN

### “How far we’ve come”

Reflecting on the work to date, Horner asks, “Is it perfect? No. Have we made mistakes? Yes. Is it much better than it was before? Yes.” Then he adds, “The task is daunting. But I measure how far we’ve come: charter schools are in a much better place than before. Most schools are doing an outstanding job, despite the lack of support. And most want to be held accountable, but in accordance with their mission.”

### Climate change

Working together—schools and policymakers, advocates and legislators—Hawaii has found a way to create a new structure that respects the autonomous missions of charter schools, while holding them accountable for successfully educating their students.

For Hawaii’s charter schools, which range from a campus as unique as WHEA to more traditional school settings, what’s next under this new law and accountability system? How will the climate change?

According to Muraoka, not much will change at WHEA. The school has high expectations of its students, and they meet them. “We don’t teach to the test, but we teach well,” he states simply. But other schools may feel the shift more. The Commission has signed one-year contracts that incorporate the new performance frameworks. These short contracts allow for time to nail down specifics of the academic accountability measures and make tweaks to the system before signing longer contracts.

NACSA will continue to support the transition, working closely with local leadership, including Tom Hutton, the Commission’s new executive director. Priorities will include ongoing communication with all the stakeholders. These collaborative relationships will likely matter even more once the policies become day-to-day realities for charter schools.

### Inspiration and demonstration site

“Charter schools are test beds for new ways of innovating in all public schools,” says Lynn Finnegan of the Network. “We want to serve as demonstration sites for things that can work in all education sectors of Hawaii, and beyond,” Finnegan posits.

She cites the inspiration of charter school WHEA, which has hosted 25,000 visiting students during its two decades of operation, visitors who are drawn there certainly by the beauty but also by the unique, hands-on classrooms. “With our new charter school law that respects autonomy and boosts accountability,” Finnegan imagines, “Hawaii could also serve as a national model of what great authorizing can mean for an entire state.”

## Hawaii Timeline / NACSA Deliverables

**JULY–DECEMBER 2011:** State Sen. Jill Tokuda convenes Charter School Governance, Accountability, and Authority Task Force; NACSA submits testimony and gives recommendations that lead to legislative changes

**SEPTEMBER 2011:** NACSA evaluates the former authorizer, the Hawaii Charter School Review Panel, and delivers policy memo

**DECEMBER 2011:** State audit of Hawaii public charter school system released

**SPRING 2012:** Act 130, legislation based on task force findings, passes; Hawaii State Public Charter School Commission is named

**SUMMER 2012:** NACSA hired as Transition Coordinator (from July 1, 2012 until June 30, 2013) by the Board of Education, based on legislation passed

**SUMMER 2012:** NACSA hires Dede Mamiya as local, on-the-ground project manager

**FALL 2012:** Commission staffing plan/budget approved by Commission and state Board (approved by legislature spring 2013); review of applications coordinated by NACSA

**WINTER 2013:** Application decisions made (five of six follow NACSA recommendations)

**SPRING 2013:** New charter contract approved (drafted by NACSA); executive director hired; financial and organizational performance frameworks approved (drafted by NACSA); academic accountability language included in contract while academic performance framework pending

**SUMMER 2013:** Execute charter contracts with schools; begin formal rulemaking process; review draft renewal application, new charter application, and closure action plan (drafted by NACSA)

**NEXT STEPS:** Revise academic performance framework to align with Strive HI

## Resources/Links

Charter School performance data:

<http://www.hawaiicharterschools.com/sites/default/files/hw34.swf>

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools' ranking/analysis of state laws:

<http://www.publiccharters.org/law/ViewState.aspx?state=HI>

Performance Audit of the Hawai'i Public Charter School System: A Report to the Governor and the Legislature of the State of Hawai'i, December 2011:

<http://hawaii.gov/auditor/Reports/2011/11-03.pdf>

Charter School Governance, Accountability, and Authority Task Force presentation:

<http://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/specialcommittee.aspx?comm=csgtf>

NACSA's *Principles & Standards for Quality Charter School Authorizing*

<http://www.qualitycharters.org/publications-resources/principles-standards.html>

## Contributors



State Senator Jill Tokuda



Curtis Muraoka  
Co-Director of WHEA



Don Horner  
State Board of Education Chair



Karen Street  
Chair of the Hawaii Public  
Charter School Commission



Lynn Finnegan  
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School Network

NACSA develops quality authorizing environments that lead to a greater number of quality charter schools. Learn more about NACSA at [www.qualitycharters.org](http://www.qualitycharters.org).

National Association of Charter School Authorizers, 2013

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