


**Public Charter School  
Admission and Enrollment  
Policies and Practices**

Informational webinar for  
charter school leaders

August 21 & 22, 2014



State Public Charter School Commission  
(‘Aha Kula Ho‘āmana)

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**Public schools and  
Schools of Choice**

- Schools of choice for students and their families
  - (Though conversion is default school for service area)
- Charter schools have unique missions and educational themes and approaches that may not be ideal for every student
- Schools may wish to be “up front” with families
- But they’re “public charter schools” – the promise of public education is universal access

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**Overview**

- Background on this issue in recent years in Hawaii
- Review and approval process: Governing boards and Commission
- Some red flags or issues in policies and practices
- Specific issues related to enrollment preferences
- Some tips and suggestions
- Feedback and questions
- Resources

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## Background

- Charter contract 1.0 was to have included school's admission and enrollment policies in Exhibit A
  - So fundamental to being a public school
- Because of significant issues, dropped for now
- Contract 1.0 merely required that policies be submitted
- But Hawaii charter law requires that almost any enrollment preferences have Commission approval
- Issues have been raised by other stakeholders
- Some schools already have had to revise policies
- Contract 2.0 (Section 5) requires Commission approval

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## Roles and Responsibilities

### Charter Schools

- Open to any student residing in the State entitled to attend DOE school
- Enroll all, up to capacity
- Use public lottery if applications exceed capacity
- Conversion schools serve geographic service area
- Post Admissions and Enrollment policy on website

### Commission

- Approve any enrollment preference except already enrolled students and siblings
- Review and approve charter school admission and enrollment policies

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## What Commission Will Be Considering

1. Whether the policies and practices comply with state and federal law;
2. Whether the policies and practices are acceptable as a matter of public education policy; and
3. Whether the school must amend or may want to consider amending a policy or practice and/or clarify its intent

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## Timeline

- **Now through Aug. 28, 2014:** Webinars, school feedback, staff recommends some guidelines to schools on certain acceptable and unacceptable policies and practices, at Aug. 28 Performance and Accountability Committee meeting.
- **Sept. 11, 2014:** Commission adopts guidelines.
- **Oct. 31, 2014:** Deadline for schools to submit current admissions and enrollment policies and procedures to the Commission. Schools that have already submitted these and do not wish to revise them can simply indicate this in Epicenter.
- **Nov-Dec. 11, 2014:** Schools whose policies raise potential issues or concerns can work with staff to address them.
- **Nov. 2014-Jan. 2015:** Performance and Accountability Committee (Dec. 11, 2014) and full Commission (Jan. 8, 2015) to review and approve admissions and enrollment policies.

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## Issues in Admissions and Enrollment Policies, Procedures, and Practices

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The key issue: Barriers to enrollment

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- Please explain how your child learns best.
- Which areas do you want to improve in?
- Explain how you will support the school.
- Share some of your concerns or obstacles that we need to address.

### ESSAY QUESTIONS & INTERVIEWS

- Screening and selecting students
- Puts pressure on parents and students to "do well"
- Non-English speakers

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- Report Cards/Transcripts
- Birth Certificates
- Examples of student writing/work
- Letters of Reference from Former Teachers
- Previous Test Scores
- Family Income Information
- Student Test Prior to Acceptance

**ITEMS REQUESTED WITH THE APPLICATION**

**Screening and selecting students**

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- What will be done to strengthen Hawaiian language in your ohana?
- Preference for Hawaiian-speaking students
- Interviews/tests to determine Hawaiian language proficiency

**HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS**

*“Every student within the State of Hawai‘i’s public school system should have reasonable access to the Kaiapuni Educational Program.” - BOE Policy 2105*

Limiting learning opportunities

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**Special Education**

It is the DOE's responsibility to provide FAPE (Free And Appropriate Education) to all students of the State of Hawaii. Current policies and practices deny charter schools the same funding/ services that are provided to other public schools. Parents must disclose whether the student is receiving special educational services (IDEA) or 504 services, and/ or has ever been tested for special education or 504. Parents must provide a copy of their child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or modification plan at the time of application.

**DENIED**

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## Special Education

- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Section 504 Plan
- Received SPED services in the past
- Existing physical or mental disabilities
- Statements saying the school may not be able to provide FAPE

**If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan, please inform the school upon acceptance so a transitional meeting can be coordinated as soon as possible.**

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## Other Possible Issues

- Provisional acceptance and/or Probationary periods
- Requirement for parents to volunteer at the school, with no exceptions for special circumstances
- Requirement to follow the mission/culture of the school (implicitly grounds for expulsion)
- Research participation release forms
- Payment of fees and/or Past obligations
- Issues with online applications

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There generally is only one reason a charter school should not accept a student who applies...

Section 302D-34(b)(2)  
HRS

You have no more space at your school

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## ENROLLMENT PREFERENCES

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### What State Law Says

- Admission shall not be limited based on race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, income level, disability, level of proficiency in the English language, need for special education services, or academic or athletic ability.
- State law categorically allows two enrollment preferences:
  1. Students enrolled the previous year
  2. Siblings of students already enrolled
- Any other enrollment preference must have Commission approval

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### Approval Process

- (This would be for when a new enrollment preference proposed after the overall review process)
- Governing board requests approval of preference and provides information on why it is proposed
- Request is reviewed by staff, and possibly with Attorney General
- Review of staff recommendation by Commission's Performance & Accountability Committee
- Committee makes recommendation to full Commission
- Commission approves or denies request
- If approved, the governing board can adopt the preference

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## Children of Staff and Governing Board Members

### Charter Schools

- Many schools currently have this enrollment preference
- Not specified in statute

### Commission

**Favoritism in schools funded with public dollars**

- Allow an "across-the-board" enrollment preference
- Percentage cap
- Additional ballots "in the hat"

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## Geographic Preference

### Charter Schools

- Place-based learning
- Commitment to serve the community and area
- Preserve the culture and history of a certain area

### Commission

**Inadvertent racial and/or socio-economic preference**

- Percentage cap
- Additional ballots "in the hat"

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## Socio-economic Preference

### Charter Schools

- Commitment to meet the need of socio-economically disadvantaged students and families
- Desire to achieve and maintain socio-economic diversity/balance in student population

### Commission

**Hawaii charter law currently includes income level as prohibited basis for admission decisions**

- Note: confusion over federal policy
- Possible statutory revision

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## Other Preferences

- Language-related:
  - Hawaiian language ability for Hawaiian language school
- Preferences designed to achieve composition of student population for other purposes, such as diversity
- Others?

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## Tips & Suggestions

- Ask: Are our admission and enrollment policies and procedures transparent and easily understood?
- Ask: Could this policy or practice potentially deter some families from applying or pose a barrier to enrollment?
- Ask: Do we really need this information before enrolling a student? Is there any reason we can't get the information after he or she is enrolled?

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## Feedback and Questions



- Can also follow up later:

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## Resources

- Recording of this webinar will be available on Commission website, along with related materials:
  - Aug. 14, 2014 update to Commission by Committee on Performance & Accountability
  - “Special Report: Class Struggle – How Charter Schools Get Students They Want,” Reuters, February 15, 2013
  - Section 302D-34, Hawaii Revised Statutes
  - Section 5 of the Charter Contract
- Go to [www.chartercommission.hawaii.gov](http://www.chartercommission.hawaii.gov)
  - Click on “For Schools”
  - Click on “Organizational Performance”

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