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## The Demise of the English Standard School System in Hawai‘i

WHAT DOES A COMMUNITY DO when an influx of people who do not speak the language of the community results in a large majority of school children who cannot speak the local language? This question raises practical, philosophical, political, economic, and sociological issues. It pits parent against parent and poses very difficult problems for policymakers. In the abstract, most people might agree with John Dewey that, “what the ablest and best parent wants for his [or her] children the community wants for all of its children,” but in real situations there can be much controversy over what is “best” and for whose children.<sup>1</sup>

Experience in Hawai‘i and elsewhere seems to indicate that, if they are able to, many parents will go to great lengths to provide their children with what they view as the “best” education. In the 1820s the missionaries in Hawai‘i sent their children on a six-month trip to New England at an early age because of the lack of Western educational opportunities and their unwillingness to have their children come into contact with Hawaiian children. Later, in 1842, they established Punahou School, initially so that their children could remain in Hawai‘i but be separated from the Hawaiians. In the early 20th century, immigrant Japanese, Korean, and Chinese parents created language schools in order that their children, forced to learn English in the public schools,

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would also learn the language of their parents' homeland. Some immigrant Japanese parents sent their children to school in Japan. Currently, some Japanese nationals in the United States are establishing Japanese schools for their children who, the parents hope, will return to Japan and careers there when the parents' responsibilities in the United States are completed. One of the lessons of the integration of many mainland schools was that once a district changed from 40 percent Caucasian to less than 40 percent Caucasian, Caucasian parents who could afford to do so tended to move or send their children to newly created private "academies."

The Hawai'i experience in this regard can now be viewed from the perspective of approximately 80 years. It is one of the few places in the country, and perhaps in the world, where large numbers of non-native speakers who were of different races and cultures were "assimilated" within one generation. This paper, however, is not about that assimilation.<sup>2</sup> It is about the response of the people who perceived the non-English-speaking children as a direct threat to their own children's education and who did not want their children associating with the non-English-speaking children, their solution to the problem as they saw it, and the results of their solution over a period of four decades. It should be noted that although both English and Hawaiian were official languages of the Territory of Hawai'i, English was the language of instruction in the public schools from 1896.<sup>3</sup>

#### IMMIGRATION PATTERNS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE SCHOOLS IN THE TERRITORY OF HAWAI'I

Starting in approximately 1852 when Hawai'i was a kingdom, the sugar planters and the Hawaiian government began importing laborers from Asia. In 1879, the importation spread to include Europe. These laborers came for a limited period of time with the expectation on the part of the employer and the laborer that the workers would return to their country of origin at the end of the contract. For a variety of reasons, growing numbers of these laborers remained in Hawai'i after their initial contract had ended.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly large numbers married Hawaiian women

or, more often, sent to their homeland for brides. In a few cases, notably the Portuguese, already established families came with the workers. Whatever the process, the result was that by 1920 there were large numbers of plantation families with children. Almost all of the children had been born in Hawai'i and, because Hawai'i became a territory of the United States in 1900, were citizens of the United States.

Compulsory education had been in effect since 1835 in Hawai'i, and educators in the kingdom and then the territory were proud of their record of universal education.<sup>5</sup> As the children of the plantation workers came of school age they were required to attend public school and they rapidly increased the school population. Thus, a 1920 federal survey claimed that only 2-3 percent of the children entering the public schools at age six or seven could speak English.<sup>6</sup> Table 1 shows the distribution by ethnicity of the children in the public schools.

Ethnicity and first language did not always coincide, especially among the Chinese, some of whom were already second generation, and the Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians, some of whom spoke only English and some of whom were bilingual, but these are the two primary exceptions. The estimate of 2-3 percent of the children speaking English as their first language in first grade seems low given the numbers in Table 1. John R. Reinecke, writing in 1935, said, "It is the writer's opinion that all estimates in the *Survey* must be taken with caution." He concluded that, ". . . the use of the English language at home and on the playgrounds of many neighborhoods became fairly general in the second decade of the present century. . . ." <sup>7</sup> Whatever figure is used, however, it is clear that a large number of children came to the public schools not able to speak much English.

At the same time that the influx of Asians was occurring, the English-speaking population was increasing both in Honolulu and on the neighbor islands. This group included middle-level plantation management and technicians, physicians, teachers, social workers, shopkeepers, skilled craftsmen, and members of the military. They lived on wages rather than dividends and interest, as did the plantation managers and owners, and their wages were insufficient to send their children to the very few English-

TABLE I  
ETHNICITY OF CHILDREN IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1919

ETHNICITY	NUMBERS	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL
Hawaiian	3,177	8.8
Part-Hawaiian	3,940	10.9
American	808	2.2
British	97	0.2
German	118	0.3
Portuguese	5,073	14.1
Japanese	16,295	45.5
Chinese	3,465	9.6
Puerto Rican	1,075	3.0
Korean	446	1.2
Spanish	470	1.3
Russian	81	0.2
Filipino	836	2.3
Other Foreigners	131	0.4
Total	36,102	

Source: U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education, *Survey of Education in Hawaii* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920) 21.

language private schools, then located primarily on the island of O'ahu, where Honolulu is situated. Even on O'ahu, the most respected private school, Punahou, did not accept all applicants, and it was too expensive for many English-speaking families. In 1920 it had a graduating class of 38, 26 of whom were Caucasian, eight part-Hawaiian, three Chinese, and one Japanese.<sup>8</sup>

#### CREATION OF THE ENGLISH STANDARD SCHOOL SYSTEM

In 1920 the U.S. Bureau of Education completed a thorough study of the schools in Hawai'i. The final report discussed the problem of so many non-native speakers of English in the public schools:

Many white people, Hawaiians and Part-Hawaiians, who can afford to pay tuition, but who would like perhaps for democratic

impulses to send their children to the public high schools, are deterred from doing so. This is mainly because their children would be outnumbered in their classes by the orientals, who have little in common with them and whose language difficulties impede the progress of all.<sup>9</sup>

The survey recommended that where possible children should be grouped according to their ability to use English for the study of language and some other subjects, but that there should be a mixing of the students in the American history and civics classes.<sup>10</sup> A report that was to have been part of the final document was deleted, evidently because some people in Washington feared negative responses to it. The report that was not included, by Dr. Frank F. Bunker, recommended:

Wherever the demand by parents who have been citizens of no other country than America is sufficient to justify it, establish schools of the same grade and kind as the Territory has established or shall establish for children of other peoples and restrict the attendance upon such schools to children of such American parents except as further provided herein.

Allow a reasonable percentage of the enrollment, perhaps 15 or 20 percent, to begin with, to be drawn from the various groups, having other national origins, living in the attendance district, the individuals to be selected on the basis of scholarship and facility in the use of the English language.

No special school to be established in a given community, however, unless proper provision has been made for the giving of equal educational facilities to the children of all other racial groups living in that community.<sup>11</sup>

Also in 1920, 400 parents of English-speaking children petitioned the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) asking for an English language school. The petition said in part, "We especially desire that the race or nationality of an applicant *be allowed no weight whatever* in this [English language] test; in other words, we desire that the sole consideration, aside from the ordinary scholastic requirements for the grade, be the *quality of the applicant's oral English.*"<sup>12</sup> The superintendent of public instruction reported to

the commissioners that such schools were legal, and that they had, in fact, been in existence before in the form of Central Grammar School, which was a "select school" for English-speaking children only.

After considering a variety of alternatives, the solution that was finally agreed upon was a separate school system called the English standard schools. The Bunker plan was modified in that parental ancestry, at least on the surface, was not to be the basis for selection; rather, any child who could pass an oral and, if the child was old enough, a written English language test was to be admitted.

Proponents of the plan argued that separation was the only way native speakers of English could progress at a normal rate of learning both in language and in other subjects. Their basic argument was that (1) children from English-speaking homes were held back by the large numbers of children who had trouble with the language; (2) in almost all schools there were not enough American-ancestry children so that they could exercise the socializing influence, generally called "Americanizing," that supporters of integrated classes wanted, and, in fact, the opposite was true, that is, the "foreign" influence would predominate; and (3) English-speaking parents, who were taxpayers, had a right to an appropriate public education for their children.

Opponents contended that the plan was undemocratic, was motivated by race and class rather than educational concerns, and worked against integration of the non-English-speaking children into the community in which they lived and in which they would become voters. The opponents agreed with John Dewey that the schools were a place in which people could escape from the group into which they had been born, but, they said, this would only work if the children were exposed to people from other racial, social, and economic strata.<sup>13</sup> Although the concept was not clearly articulated, the idea that education represented access to power, especially for the precariously situated, permeated the concerns of people who were opposed to establishing a separate school system.

The only group that actually petitioned against the plan when it was being discussed by the DPI was the Portuguese. They were in

a difficult position, caught between the laborers, the majority of whom were Asians, and the predominantly Caucasian management. Their social and economic situation was different enough from the rest of the Caucasian population that they were classified in most studies as "Portuguese." There were generally two additional specific Caucasian categories, "Spanish" and "Puerto Rican," with another category called "other Caucasian" for the rest of the Caucasian population, which was primarily from the United States and northern Europe. The Portuguese feared, and, as it turned out, rightly so, that many of their children would not be able to pass the English test and would be in the non-English standard schools, called district schools, with the Asian-ancestry children.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the opposition, the plan was initiated in 1924. On O'ahu, Lincoln Elementary School was started as a separate English standard school. When there were sufficient students, Roosevelt Junior High School was created. In 1929 it was made into Roosevelt High School, and Stevenson Intermediate was designated the English standard intermediate school. Gradually three other standard elementary schools, Kapalama, Thomas Jefferson, and Ali'iolani, were added on O'ahu. On the neighbor islands, separate English standard elementary schools were established on Maui (Maui Standard, later named Kaunoa), Moloka'i (Holomua), and Hawai'i (Hilo Standard, later Riverside). In places where there were not enough children to warrant a separate elementary school, a separate room or section was created, sometimes in the same building, sometimes elsewhere in the community.<sup>15</sup>

This program was in many ways contrary to the strong democratic impulse that people like John Dewey expressed. Dewey was very influential in most educational quarters in Hawai'i. On this issue, however, many educational leaders, such as Elsie Wilcox, commissioner for education from Kaua'i, believed that the separate schools were necessary.<sup>16</sup> The concerns and fears about race and class, as well as language, that the English standard school system represented were more openly acknowledged in the 1920s than in later years. The feeling of being deluged with people who were not assimilable was widespread. It manifested itself on the

mainland, for example, in the Immigration Quota Act of 1924.<sup>17</sup> In the South, schools were segregated by law until the 1950s and de facto segregation continued well into the 1980s. While the approach of the DPI was, evidently, unique, it was in line with thinking on the mainland. In 1941 the Hawai'i territorial Legislative Reference Bureau surveyed a number of states with large immigrant groups about their practices in dealing with non-native speakers of English. It found that even at that time some school districts had separate classes, although not separate schools. The focus, however, was not on protecting the children who spoke standard English but on doing remedial work with the immigrant children. By this time in Hawai'i the majority of children spoke some form of English, ranging from pidgin to standard English.<sup>18</sup>

#### THE ENGLISH STANDARD EXPERIMENT

From the outset, the plan was that the English standard system would be an interim measure, one designed to last until the majority of children in the public system spoke English as their native language, presumably one generation. In fact, it lasted somewhat longer, until the early 1960s in some places.

There were two major goals involved in the creation of a separate school system. The primary articulated goal was to ensure that the children of English-speaking parents were provided an education in which they were not held back in English and other subjects because of the presence of non-English-speaking children. In 1941 a citizen's group conducted a study of the school system and included in its report several comparisons between English standard and district school pupils. In every case the English standard children performed better academically than did the non-English standard children. As table 2 indicates, the graduates of Roosevelt were ranked far higher than their counterparts from the public schools in their speaking ability when they went to the University of Hawaii.

Table 3 gives the same results for written English tests. The number of errors made in written work for students in the English standard schools in the 6th grade was the same as for those in the non-English standard schools in the 12th grade.



TABLE 2  
 CLASSIFICATION OF THE SPEECH OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN HAWAII WHO WERE  
 PROSPECTIVE FRESHMEN AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII FOR THE YEARS 1939-40 AND 1940-41

CLASSIFICATION OF SPEECH	GRADUATES OF AN ENGLISH SCHOOL: ROOSEVELT		GRADUATES OF NON-ENGLISH STANDARD		GRADUATES OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS		TOTAL GRADUATES IN THE STUDY	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Typical American speech	162	62.3	82	5.2	73	18.6	317	14.2
Slightly defective speech (a lisp or slight dialect)	66	25.4	221	14.0	93	23.7	380	17.0
Marked dialectal speech	30	11.5	408	25.8	103	26.2	541	24.2
Very marked dialectal speech	2	0.8	650	41.1	98	24.9	750	33.6
Speech that is very difficult to understand	0	0.0	220	13.9	26	6.6	246	11.0
Total	260	100.0	1,581	100.0	393	100.0	2,234	100.0

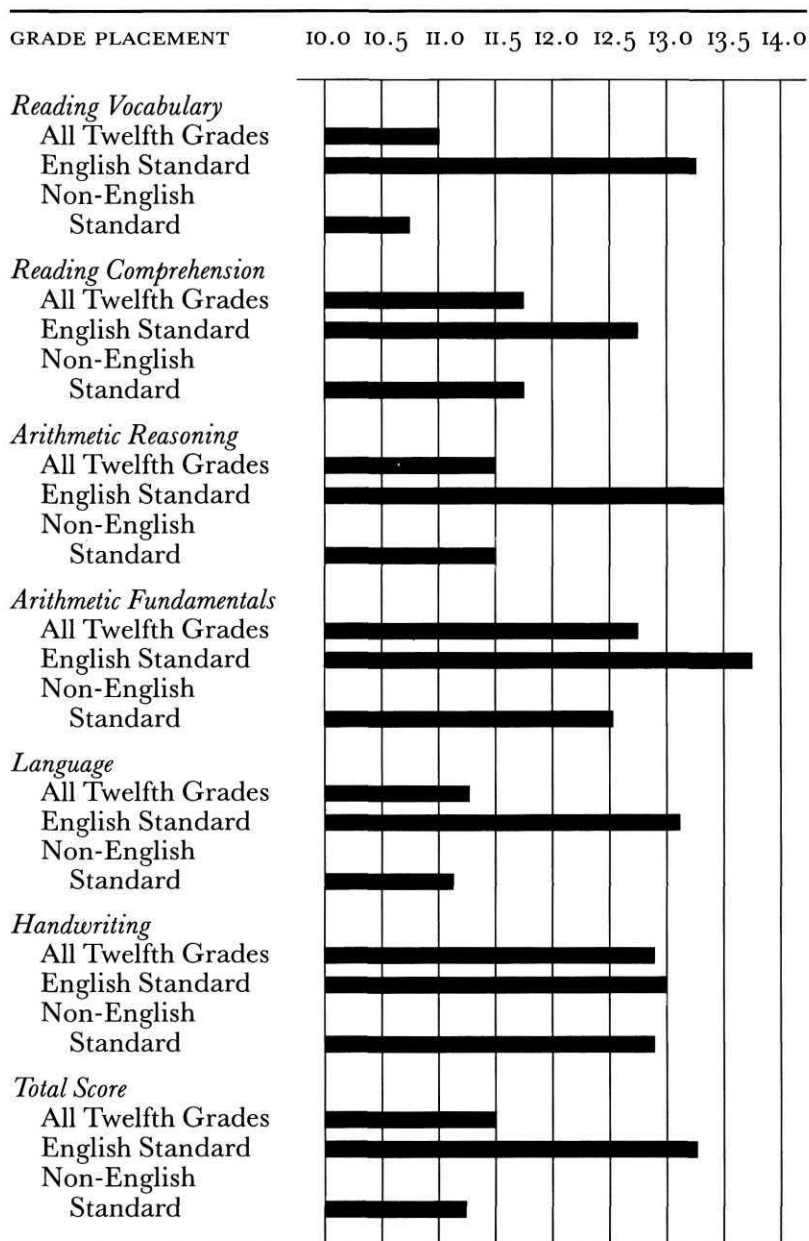
Source: Joseph Farrington, Chairman, *Community Survey of Education in Hawaii—1941* (Honolulu: Pacific Herald Publishing, 1942) 112.

TABLE 3  
 ERRORS PER THOUSAND WORDS MADE BY  
 PUBLIC SCHOOL CHILDREN IN HAWAII<sup>1</sup>

	GRADE											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Non-English Standard Schools:												
Oral Usage	278	247	173	160	174	150	123	121	115	86	101	83
Written Work			134	125	127	107	94	90	88	57	50	44
English Standard Schools:												
Oral Usage	48	28	41	32	36	30						
Written Work			56	50	55	44						

Source: Farrington, *Community Survey of Education in Hawaii—1941* 107.

TABLE 4  
TWELFTH GRADE ACHIEVEMENT SCORES



Source: Farrington, *Community Survey of Education in Hawaii—1941* (Honolulu: Pacific Herald Publishing, 1942) fig. 4 following p. 76.

Table 4 indicates that, with the exception of handwriting, the English standard children performed better in all subjects.

While these data are clear, the conclusions that should be drawn from them are not. One might say that the English standard schools achieved the goal of providing the English-speaking children an environment where they were not held back because large numbers of their classmates did not speak English as a first language. However, an informal survey of some of the few children on the neighbor islands who came from English-speaking homes, went to English standard elementary schools, and then went to a mixed high school in the 1930s indicates that they were not noticeably "disadvantaged" because of not being in an English standard high school. Most of them went to college and almost all of them could have had their parents had sufficient income. At least by the time the children were in high school it probably did not matter too much whether they were in mixed or separate classes. Many of the children from McKinley High School, for years the district high school in Honolulu, and from the neighbor island high schools, who were children of immigrants did extremely well after they graduated, despite whatever problems they may have had with the English language. Today, they are successful politicians, businessmen, and professionals.<sup>19</sup>

A second articulated goal of the English standard system was to assure that children of English-speaking parents learned Western, not Asian, values and behavior. This was usually cast more frankly in terms of American values. This goal, as with the former one, is somewhat difficult to assess, for the additional reason that the public schools and other institutions such as the YWCA and YMCA and the Christian churches had intensive Americanization programs.<sup>20</sup> Thus, had the children who were in the English standard schools gone to a district school they may have had the same kind of values inculcated in them as they did in the English standard system. In fact, the Americanization program was probably more intense at McKinley than it was at Roosevelt, in part because Miles Carey, the principal at McKinley for many years, was determined to show what he believed was a bigoted establishment that the children of immigrants were as intelligent, hard-working, patriotic, and "American" as were the establishment's own children.

## THE ENDING OF THE ENGLISH STANDARD SYSTEM

All during the existence of the English standard system there had been some opposition to it, and the opposition grew as a new generation of Asian-ancestry parents came into contact with the public schools in the 1940s. Most of these parents had been born in the territory. They were more confident of their rights and more willing to exercise them, they were starting to organize in unions, and they were voters. By 1940 90 percent of the 92,000 children in the public schools were American citizens by birth.<sup>21</sup>

The issue came to a head in 1940 at Maemae Elementary School in Honolulu. Large numbers of navy families with young children moved into Nu‘uanu Valley as the military expanded in preparation for the possibility of war in the Pacific. The DPI decided to make Maemae into an English standard school. The children then at Maemae were given the English examination for placement in an English standard school. The examination required the children to read a story, pronounce a vocabulary of 28 words and seven figures, and change present into past tense and singular into plural. Picture books were used for conversations with young children.<sup>22</sup> Seventy-five percent of the Maemae children failed the test and were scheduled to be transferred to other elementary schools, several of which had been experiencing declining enrollment. The parents of the children who were to be transferred were very angry. They protested to the DPI and held demonstrations in front of ‘Iolani Palace, where the territorial legislature met. As one of the parents said, “You’re giving us a raw deal! We’re American citizens and this school is for this community.” They argued that the children should not be transferred because of the distance to other schools and that they should be taught English well enough so that they could pass the examination.<sup>23</sup> The heart of the matter was expressed in a petition that read:

And furthermore any selective grouping of children according to their ability to speak and write the English language is unfair and entirely too prejudicial because it is the duty of your servants in these schools to train the young children in the manner of speaking

and writing the English language correctly. This practice should be entirely removed or greatly modified.<sup>24</sup>

The petition was signed by parents who had Chinese, English, Hawaiian, Japanese, and Portuguese surnames, a cross-section of the racial groupings in the territory. Fifty parents threatened to keep their children home.<sup>25</sup>

In short order a compromise was reached. Grades 1 and 2 would continue to have non-English standard sections in addition to six English standard classes already being held there. There would be special attention to remedial English so that the children could pass the test in June. For some of the parents, however, it was too little, too late. A group of mothers continued to picket 'Iolani Palace with signs that read, "Down with Dual Educational System!"<sup>26</sup>

The *Star-Bulletin* supported the Maemae parents editorially, observing that another English standard school was needed but that this was "too hard on the poor people at Maemae."<sup>27</sup> However, the paper was also editorially opposed to ending the English standard system. It pointed out in an editorial titled, "Easy to Say" that not all of the children spoke good English and neither did all of the teachers. If the standard and district schools were combined, there would be no standard.<sup>28</sup>

The advent of World War II slowed the demand for a change. In the 1942-43 school year the English standard and district PTAS at Manoa Elementary School combined and the school began combining the classes.<sup>29</sup> In 1944 the Hawaii Congress of Parents and Teachers passed a resolution supporting combining classes at the elementary level and requesting an intensive effort to bring all classes up to the English standard level.

As the war wound down, the issue heated up. In 1945 the territorial legislature passed Act 126, which mandated the DPI to establish a standard section in all elementary schools "as rapidly as possible."<sup>30</sup> This solution did not satisfy the opponents of the dual system, however, because it continued the separation, and it was the separation itself they opposed.

In 1947 the Legislative Reference Bureau conducted a study of the English standard schools and concluded that:

There can be no question but that English standard schools and sections are regarded by some persons as a means of maintaining social and economic stratification and discrimination. Ability to speak good English has become associated with status, at least to the extent that use of "pidgin" sets one off as not "belonging" to the middle class groups. This standard for gauging one's social position is utilized not alone by haoles [Caucasians], but by other racial groups, as well. . . . For one occupying a relatively privileged position in society, failure of his child to enter an English standard school or section is a blow to his social prestige; to one occupying a more lowly position, successful completion of the test by the child reflects credit on the parent and thereby raises the latter's status.<sup>31</sup>

In 1949 the legislature passed Act 227, which ordered the DPI to:

raise the standards of all public schools to the level of the English Standard system and to provide for the transition from the dual to the single standard system starting in September 1949, and to continue these adjustments annually, until all the schools of the Territory are raised to the level of a single standard system.<sup>32</sup>

The department was permitted "to continue to group pupils in any public school in accordance with their abilities and educational needs."

Act 227 was the beginning of the end of the English standard system. On O'ahu the first grade in the English standard schools became a district grade, with children assigned according to neighborhood. The following year that grade became the second grade and the new first grade was also combined. By 1960 the last English standard class at Roosevelt High School graduated.

The situation was somewhat different on the neighbor islands. On Maui, for example, the initial intention was to simply end the English standard system as of September 1955. However, a group of parents prevailed on the superintendent of public instruction to combine the schools year by year. That was done for the first three years, but at the end of that time, because of the declining enrollment at Pa'ia and Spreckelsville district elementary schools those schools were closed and all of the children were sent to

Kaunoa, thus terminating the English standard school. The English standard students continued at Kaunoa through 1963 no matter what district they lived in, partly maintaining a student body that had started in the English standard school.

Tables 5 and 6 address the question of the racial distribution in the schools.

In 1947, when the pressure was building to abolish the schools, the Portuguese and Puerto Ricans were the only racial groups whose enrollment in the English standard system was approximately the same as that in the overall school population. Spanish, "Other Caucasians," Chinese, Koreans, and "Others" were overrepresented, and Japanese, Hawaiians, Part-Hawaiians, and Filipinos were underrepresented. The most overrepresented were the "Other Caucasians," and the most underrepresented were the Japanese.

The Legislative Reference Bureau study recommended that a study be done to determine:

whether the present practice of segregation retards the learning of good English by children with poor speech habits, and whether it aids those who pass the admittance tests and are enrolled under the English standard program. Once this is evaluated, then, as a matter of policy, a decision may be reached on whether the influence of students with good speech habits on their fellow students would be of greater aid to them than the harmful effects resulting from the reverse form of influence. A material element in reaching the answer would appear to be the speech abilities of the teachers. . . . Unquestionably, many persons advocating the continuation of the dual school system believe that the department of public instruction's teaching staff cannot be relied upon to maintain the standards of the pupils with good speech habits while raising those with poor habits.<sup>33</sup>

The study was never conducted.

Although the opponents of the English standard system said that all the schools should be brought up to the English standard level, that in fact did not happen. Thirty years later there is ongoing criticism of the language ability and performance of some public as well as some private school children.<sup>34</sup>



TABLE 5  
DISTRIBUTION BY RACIAL ORIGIN, 1947

RACE	STANDARD	ENROLLMENT		TOTAL	STANDARD	PERCENTAGE		SCH POP
		PUB-DIST	PRIVATE			DIST.	PRIVATE	
Hawaiian	15	2,493	346	2,854	.5	87.4	12.1	2.5
Part-Hawaiian	1,410	16,160	5,882	23,452	6.0	68.9	25.1	20.5
Portuguese	359	3,766	2,948	7,073	5.1	53.2	41.7	6.2
Spanish	7	90	64	161	4.3	55.9	39.8	.1
Other Caucasian	1,497	4,062	3,875	9,434	15.9	43.1	41.1	8.2
Chinese	890	3,901	2,527	7,318	12.2	53.3	34.5	6.4
Japanese	1,514	38,754	4,828	45,096	3.4	85.9	10.7	39.3
Korean	174	900	279	1,353	12.9	66.5	20.6	1.2
Filipino	79	8,559	1,355	9,993	4.3	85.6	13.6	8.7
Puerto Rican	11	1,611	213	1,835	.8	87.8	11.6	1.6
Other	536	4,627	884	5,511	8.9	76.5	14.6	5.3
	6,492	84,923	23,201	114,616	5.7	74.1	20.2	

Source: Territory of Hawaii, Legislative Reference Bureau, *Hawaii's English Standard Schools*, Report no. 3-48 (Honolulu: U of Hawaii, 1948) 34.

TABLE 6  
 PERCENTAGE ENROLLMENT BY RACIAL ORIGIN, 1947

RACE	STANDARD	DISTRICT	PRIVATE
Hawaiian	.2	2.9	1.5
Part-Hawaiian	21.7	19.0	25.4
Portuguese	5.5	4.4	12.7
Spanish	.1	.1	.3
Other Caucasian	23.1	4.8	16.7
Chinese	13.7	4.6	10.9
Japanese	23.3	45.6	20.8
Korean	2.7	1.1	1.2
Filipino	1.2	10.1	5.8
Puerto Rican	.2	1.9	.9
Other	8.3	5.4	3.8

Source: Territory of Hawaii, Legislative Reform Bureau, *Hawaii's English Standard Schools*, Report no. 3-48 (Honolulu: U of Hawaii, 1948) 34.

It is unclear whether those who supported abolition of the separate schools really thought it was going to be possible to bring the language performance of all of the students up to that in the English standard schools. It is probable, for one thing, that they did not anticipate the large number of immigrant children who would continue to enter Hawai'i's schools. Interviews with people associated with the English standard system indicate that they believed the general level of English proficiency would decline with the ending of the schools. Despite this concern, a number of neighbor island parents interviewed for this article kept their children in public schools because they did not believe the problem was serious enough to warrant either the expense or the difficulty of sending children to another island to board and attend a private school.

More general statistics indicate that there was not an exodus from the public school system when the English standard schools closed. Table 7 shows that the private school enrollment remained

TABLE 7  
ENROLLMENT IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS

SCHOOL YEAR	TOTAL ENROLLMENT	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	PRIVATE SCHOOLS	PRIVATE %
1947-48	108,248	84,923	23,325	21.5
1953-54	132,361	106,464	25,897	19.6
1955-56	145,794	119,054	26,740	18.3
1960-61	175,172	145,134	30,038	17.1
1965-66	194,595	162,164	32,431	16.7
1970-71	213,165	180,770	32,395	15.2
1975-76	212,171	176,232	35,939	16.9
1979-80	205,580	168,393	37,187	18.1
1980-81	202,972	165,094	37,878	18.7
1985-86	200,952	164,169	36,783	18.3
1988-89	203,358	167,899	35,459	17.4

Source: Robert C. Schmitt, *Historical Statistics of Hawaii* (Honolulu: UP of Hawaii, 1977) 216-17; *State of Hawaii Data Book* (Honolulu: State of Hawaii Department of Business and Economic Development, 1988) 88.

quite constant in the decades following the ending of the English standard system.

This seems to demonstrate that there was no “flight” to private education when the option of the separate English standard schools no longer existed.

#### ANALYSIS

Assuming that a community wants to equalize its schools, and by doing so take away a privileged situation from some children for the benefit of others, how best is this to be done? Social engineering through public policy has on occasion had unexpected and not altogether welcome results.

There are several reasons why the English standard system was dismantled after World War II with very little overt opposition. There were no demonstrations against the plan, no petitions, no violence. Hawai‘i in the 1950s was not the same Hawai‘i that had existed when the system was created in the 1920s. Those differences give insights into why it was possible to take a significant, important privilege away from part of the population without civil strife.

First, strong community pressure was critical. Probably the most important reason that opposition was minimized was that the people who supported the continuation of the system had become a political minority. A number of people who were interviewed for this article observed that when the decision was made to abolish the schools they thought it was a mistake, but that politically it was impossible for the schools to continue. While they may have complained in the privacy of their homes, they were, by and large, unwilling to do so publicly. After World War II the Democratic party in Hawai‘i became the bastion of reform-minded Asian-Americans, primarily second-generation Japanese, who, as the preceding data make clear, had not been represented in the English standard system in proportion to their numbers in the school population. One of the main planks of the newly empowered Democratic party was the ending of the dual schools. This was tied to some extent to the drive for statehood. The dual schools were thought of by supporters of statehood, both

those who favored the schools and those who did not, as a problem. They feared that people on the mainland would conclude that the territory was not ready for statehood if it had to maintain special schools for people who spoke standard English.

Second, by 1958 it was becoming less acceptable to have separate public schools of any kind. The 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education*,<sup>35</sup> had held that separate schools for different races were inherently unequal, and although the situation was not the same in Hawai'i, the fact of two school systems was distasteful to many people. "Popular opinion," which in the 1920s had generally supported the idea, now turned against it.

Third, the district public schools had become attractive enough to keep many parents from participating in a flight from the new situation. The Americanization program, unpalatable as it was (and continues to be in the view of some people), had been quite successful. The new generation of school children could speak English, although there was an ongoing debate about pidgin.<sup>36</sup> They had values and behavior which were very much like those of other American children. The heavy "foreign" influence, which was the basis for part of the fear that English-speaking parents had in the 1920s had decreased greatly. The ordeal of the first generation, so well described for mainland U.S. immigrants by Ronald Takaki in *Iron Cages*, had already taken place.<sup>37</sup> The experience of the second generation was similar to that found in many mainland U.S. studies.<sup>38</sup> By no means were all of the "Americanized" Asian-ancestry children or their parents happy with the results. The third and fourth generations in some cases feel even more strongly about the injustice of the process. From the point of view of the parents of the children in the English standard system, however, the change meant that their children would be with children whose academic abilities in English were not markedly dissimilar from their own.

Fourth, several students of ethnic groups have observed that as a large number of group members become middle class, usually in the second or third generation, there is a significant change in the relationship between the group and the dominant culture.<sup>39</sup> The group in Hawai'i that came to adulthood in the 1940s and 1950s had changed from the peasant immigrant class of their par-

ents to more urban, well-educated business entrepreneurs and professionals. Stephen Steinberg in particular sees attaining middle-class status as a key to better integration of the group into the rest of the society, and that seems to have been the case with the Asian-ancestry young adults during the time under study here.

Fifth, while the Americanization program was probably the dominant factor in changing people's behavior, there had developed during these years what came to be known as the "local" culture. Recent studies on the u.s. mainland have focused primarily on changes that took place in the minority culture, but the dominant one in Hawai'i changed as well. The local culture, discussed by Richard Rapson in *Fairly Lucky You Live Hawaii*, was a composite of Hawaiian, Asian, and American language, values, and behavior.<sup>40</sup> This local culture, according to Jonathan Okamura, was based primarily on American institutions which were imposed on Hawaiians and the immigrants.<sup>41</sup> Increasingly, however, it became important for the Caucasians as well to adapt to the local culture if they wished to succeed in school and in later years. By the 1950s there was more of a shared culture among the Hawaiian, Asian-ancestry, and Caucasian members of the community than had been the case in the 1920s. This shared culture grew in part out of the increasing interaction that the various groups had with each other and the ability of almost all of them to communicate in English. Whereas on the plantations, the various ethnic groups may have lived in separate areas and spent most of their time with members of their own group, that was less the case in the towns. As the paternalistic plantation system ended under pressure from the ILWU after World War II, fewer and fewer families lived in plantation housing. When the more highly educated second generation moved into urban areas they found jobs in education, government, the professions, and some businesses, which brought them in contact with the Caucasian and Hawaiian communities. The contact broke down some of the barriers. This local culture provided a milieu for children of different races to find some common ground in their school life.

Thus, by 1960 there existed in Hawai'i a whole configuration of conditions which made ending the dual system possible without major conflict. If not everyone was happy with the decision, and if

some people chose to take their children out of the public schools and put them in private schools, parents evidently felt that they had sufficient options so that outright resistance was neither necessary nor practical.

## CONCLUSION

The demise of the English standard school system in Hawai'i seems to show that when the general level of education of all children is fairly near the norm expected by the community, parents with the means to do so will not overtly oppose an effort to take away special opportunities for their own children. This is especially true if there is strong majority sentiment for the change. While some families chose private education when the English standard system was abolished, the percentage of students in private schools did not rise over the decade.

Hawai'i, along with many other areas, is moving in the direction of permitting parents much more freedom to choose the public school their children will attend and to influence school organization. There are some fears that this may lead to more segregation by class and by race. This may be the only solution to current problems, but in the long run providing quality education for all children, expensive as it is for some children, seems to be the most workable way to avoid the separation by race, ethnicity, and class that often exists in a multicultural society and is usually reflected in its educational systems.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> John Dewey, *The School and Society* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1900) 7.
- <sup>2</sup> See Judith Gething, "The Educational and Civic Leadership of Elsie Wilcox, 1920-1932," *HJH* 16 (1982): 184-205.
- <sup>3</sup> Benjamin Wist, *A Century of Public Education in Hawaii* (Honolulu: Hawaii Educational Review, 1940) 130.
- <sup>4</sup> Edward Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1985); Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1974).
- <sup>5</sup> Wist, *A Century of Public Education in Hawaii* 26.
- <sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education, *Survey of Education in Hawaii* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920) 37.

- <sup>7</sup> John E. Reinecke, *Language and Dialect in Hawaii: A Sociolinguistic History to 1935*, ed. Stanley M. Tsuzaki (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1969) 165-66.
- <sup>8</sup> Marielouise Morley, "A Study of the 1924 Graduates of Punahou," M.A. thesis, U of Hawaii, 1936, 14.
- <sup>9</sup> 1920 *Survey* 217.
- <sup>10</sup> 1920 *Survey* 246-47.
- <sup>11</sup> *F XCI*, no. 3 (1922): 61-62.
- <sup>12</sup> Governor's File: McCarthy, Territorial Departments, Public Instruction, Superintendent, July-December 1920, letter to commissioners for public instruction, 1 July 1920, AH.
- <sup>13</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1966) 20.
- <sup>14</sup> Territory of Hawaii, Department of Public Instruction Minutes, 23 May 1922: 109, AH.
- <sup>15</sup> Territory of Hawaii, Legislative Reference Bureau, *Hawaii's English Standard Schools*, Report No. 3-48 (Honolulu: U of Hawaii, 1948) 4.
- <sup>16</sup> Department of Public Instruction Minutes, 7 Sept. 1920: 44, AH.
- <sup>17</sup> Henry J. Perkinson, *The Imperfect Panacea: American Faith in Education, 1865-1976* (New York: Random House, 1977) 86-89.
- <sup>18</sup> *Hawaii's English Standard Schools* 4-19.
- <sup>19</sup> Linda Menton and Eileen Tamura, *A History of Hawaii* (Honolulu: Curriculum, Research and Development Group, College of Education, U of Hawaii, 1989) 225-30.
- <sup>20</sup> Gething, "The Educational and Civic Leadership of Elsie Wilcox," 193-97.
- <sup>21</sup> "Isle School Objectives are Listed," *HSB*, 5 Sept. 1940: 13, col. 6.
- <sup>22</sup> "Long Announces Plan to Aid Situation at Maemae," *HSB*, 25 Sept. 1940: 2, col. 4.
- <sup>23</sup> "Parents Demand That Shifted Children Be Retained At Maemae," *HSB*, 23 Sept. 1940: 1, col. 1.
- <sup>24</sup> "Senatorial Inquiry On Maemae Is Planned," *HSB*, 24 Sept. 1940: 1, col. 2.
- <sup>25</sup> "Maemae Parents To Keep Children Home," *HSB*, 26 Sept. 1940: 1, col. 6.
- <sup>26</sup> "Maemae School Partially Restored To Former Basis," *HSB*, 1 Oct. 1940: 1.
- <sup>27</sup> "Too Harsh a Remedy," *HSB*, 24 Sept. 1940: 8.
- <sup>28</sup> "Easy To Say," *HSB*, 12 Oct. 1940: 6, col. 1.
- <sup>29</sup> *Hawaii's English Standard Schools* 6.
- <sup>30</sup> Session Laws, Territory of Hawaii, Regular Session, 1945: 56-57.
- <sup>31</sup> *Hawaii's English Standard Schools* 12.
- <sup>32</sup> Session Laws, Territory of Hawaii, Regular Session, 1949: 97-98.
- <sup>33</sup> *Hawaii's English Standard Schools* 14.
- <sup>34</sup> *HSB*, 27 Dec. 1991: A4.
- <sup>35</sup> 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- <sup>36</sup> See Elizabeth B. Carr, *Da Kine Talk: From Pidgin to Standard English in Hawaii* (Honolulu: UP of Hawaii, 1972).



- <sup>37</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1979).
- <sup>38</sup> See Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot, The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1963); Michael Novak, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics: Politics and Culture in the Seventies* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).
- <sup>39</sup> See Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*; Stephen Steinberg, *Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1981).
- <sup>40</sup> Richard Rapson, *Fairly Lucky You Live Hawaii: Cultural Pluralism in the 50th State* (Lanham, Md.: UP of America, 1980).
- <sup>41</sup> Jonathan Y. Okamura, "Aloha Kanaka Me Ke Aloha 'Aina: Local Culture and Society in Hawaii," *Amerasia* 7.2 (1980): 119-37.

