

Kamehameha Schools Faculty Association

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Hotline Number: 539-2450

Mahalo, Dean, for being there

Who is this guy we keep hearing about? Where do our union dues go? New members may be wondering about these things. Several years have gone by since we started KSFA and it seems appropriate to offer some background information, and maybe to remind ourselves of our good fortune.

Dean Choy is a graduate of St. Louis High School and Yale. His website (deanchoy.com) lists his education and legal experience.

Dean is an attorney in private practice, specializing in labor and employment law. This is a field about which all of us knew nothing a few years ago. (We are still learning!) There are lawyers who mainly represent management, and lawyers who represent unions. As with other areas of the law, labor law is complex and constantly changing as new decisions are handed down by the courts or new laws written. KSFA, an independent union, retained Dean to represent us at the very beginning of our journey, as we were exploring the idea of forming a faculty union.

We cannot even say that we retained him in the traditional sense, because Dean initially charged us a greatly reduced rate for his services as we went through the process of getting the signatures of 30% of the teachers, holding a certification election and bargaining for our first contract.

Dean guided us as we petitioned the National

Labor Relations Board in the spring of 1998 to request an election to form a union. He represented us at the hearing and sometimes spoke to the press on our behalf. At that point, teachers engaging in union activities were protected by law in theory but still vulnerable to retaliation, especially by the "old regime." Dean became our public "voice."

After the union was certified, we all could easily have been derailed. The school administration petulantly hired the two most effective anti-labor, union-busters in town, Bob Katz and Buddy McGuire, to sit on its negotiating team. Frequent and numerous attempts were made to include provisions in the new contract that would have gutted the ability of the union to effectively represent the teachers. Dean deftly guided our negotiating team

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Below is the 2001-2002 Representative Assembly meeting schedule. Meetings are open to teachers, and are held in the woodworking classroom in the Technology Building (Larry McElheny's room). Just to be sure of the date and place, check with your representative before attending a meeting. We are planning on refreshments at meetings. Come share them with us!

~~September 12~~
~~October 10~~
~~November 14~~
~~December 12~~
~~January 16~~

~~February 13~~
~~March 13~~
~~April 10~~
~~May 15~~

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around these minefields. After two years of negotiations, and a change of trustees, we finally ended up with a contract we can all live with, more or less.

Your KSFA leadership team has always found Dean to be straightforward, honest, and knowledgeable about everything we encountered. He gives us advice which we then decide to follow or

not. In every case, though, his suggestions have proven to be sound, and we have been grateful for his wise counsel. He is generous with his time and always goes “the extra mile” to help KSFA.

As you collect your pay raises over the next two-and-a-half years, think of Dean Choy. We all owe him a lot.

— *Diane Tanner-Cazinha, KES*

why we still need a faculty union ...

The dark side

While the following conversation between me and an imaginary KS Leader (Dr. KSL) is fictitious, the issues are of real concern. The views expressed by me are my views. The views expressed by Dr. KSL represent the KS position as best I have been able to determine. No actual administrator is the model for Dr. KSL.

Bill: Hi, Dr. KSL, you remember that agreement we signed last year?

KSL: Yes, Bill. You mean the one with the great pay raise?

Bill: That’s the one. You remember the part about disciplining only for “just and sufficient cause?”

KSL: What’s your point, Bill? You’re normally more direct. You know my answers depend upon what I am defending. Can’t you just spring the trap now so I can develop an escape plan?

Bill: Humor me. I am working on my people skills and trying not to show my “dark side.” Besides these are easy questions and there is no reason to fear the truth, is there?

KSL: Of course not. And I agree, you need to work on that “dark side.” You always paint such a negative picture. I am sure things aren’t as bad as you think. What’s on your mind?

Bill: I am concerned that KS has no intention of disciplining only for just cause.

KSL: Gee Bill, I thought we were going to work on that dark side.

Bill: Sorry, let me rephrase that, Columbo-style, into a series of innocent questions. Sir, I am puzzled that none of our KS supervisors seems to know what “just cause” means.

KSL: Just how many supervisors have you talked to Bill?

Bill: Seven, so far. I’d rather not mention their names. It’s not their fault. They

should have been trained seeing that all were responsible for the discipline of numerous KS employees and some had even investigated a just cause grievance.

KSL: Good point, Bill. I’ll see that they get trained. Problem solved. But, I sense that is not all.

Bill: You’re right sir, there is this other problem. However, the undark side of me wants to thank you for the commitment to training. It’s a nice step in the right direction. The problem is that the sheer quantity and

I am puzzled that none of our KS supervisors seems to know what “just cause” means.

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the very nature of KS disciplinary policies defy just cause application.

KSL: I sense, with some dread, that you're going to explain that statement.

Bill: I appreciate your patience on this. It's a difficult problem. Do you recall how many commandments God gave Moses?

KSL: Yes Bill, there were 10.

Bill: That's right! And, I'll bet you can probably name most of them. Now, can you tell me how many commandments KS has, or how many pages of commandments, or how many documents with commandments KS supervisors are charged to enforce?

KSL: No. But, management has a right to write as many disciplinary rules as they want.

Bill: True, there are no legal limits. And, just for your information, in addition to the Employee Handbook there are 304 pages of assorted Administrative Memoranda that KS claims has disciplinary consequences.

KSL: Well Bill, what do you recommend we do about it?

Bill: Two things: First, consolidate all disciplinary rules in a single document. Second, reduce the number of rules.

KSL: We will think about it. Anything else?

Bill: Afraid so, so far we've only discussed the number of rules. We haven't yet talked about what's wrong with the rules.

KSL: Bill, what makes you think you can do a better job of writing our rules?

Bill: It's not a question of talent, but of philoso-

And, just for your information, in addition to the Employee Handbook there are 304 pages of assorted Administrative Memoranda that KS claims have disciplinary consequences.

phy and applicability. What kind of things should be managed through discipline and what kind of things can be controlled by discipline?

KSL: Those are things for management to decide.

Bill: Yes and no. Yes, management should develop a philosophy about what behaviors are best dealt with through discipline. But no, human nature makes it unlikely that some goals will ever be achieved through discipline. For instance, high morale, outstanding productivity, and loyalty to KS are goals that resist achievement through discipline.

KSL: But Bill, a rule like the one on loyalty could come in handy for dealing with cases of bad behavior. Suppose an employee intentionally harmed the school because he thought he had been mistreated. He may not have violated a particular rule, but just exercised bad judgment. Without the loyalty rule, we might not have any way to respond.

Bill: (Trying to control his dark side.) Has KS ever used the loyalty rule?

KSL: No.

Bill: Can't KS terminate an "at will" employee at any time for any reason?

KSL: Yes.

Bill: What percent of KSFA employees do you think will grieve an application of the loyalty rule if they are targeted?

KSL: I guess if I were in their shoes, about 100%.

Bill: So either the rule is useless, or it's going to make a lot of work for both of us. But the worse thing is that it lacks honesty. It doesn't really look like a bonafide rule or policy. Rather, it looks like an excuse to punish someone.

The dark side, continued from page 2

KSL: Things are getting dark, but go on.
 Bill: You said it yourself. It's "handy." It defies evenhanded application to everyone who may be "disloyal." It's not possible to keep track of every employee's loyalty. The "rule" is only applied against employees who are perceived to have done something "bad" and no other rule can be found for punishing them.

KSL: What's the difference? If they're bad, they get punished, and that's what should happen. Well, it's certainly been a pleasure

You are asking us to give up the right to appeal to a neutral third party management's use of its most serious discipline option - termination of an employee.

Bill: In many cases KSFA would agree with you, but what if the non-renewal is the result of discipline?

KSL: Makes no difference. KS must be allowed the discretion to non-renew for any reason.

Bill: That discretion would completely undo our agreement to discipline only for just cause.

KSL: How so? Why can't you trust our use of discretion on non-renewals?

Bill: You are asking us to give up the right to appeal to a neutral third party management's use of its most serious discipline option - termination of an employee.

KSL: No, you could still grieve a disciplinary decision based on just cause in mid-contract.

Bill: Who would contest a disciplinary decision in the middle of a one-year contract knowing that before an arbitrator could render a decision, he would be out of a job at the end of the year with no recourse? It would be smarter to submit to any unjust discipline than to risk non-renewal.

KSL: There has to be some trust, Bill.

Bill: There is someone we should all be able to trust.

KSL: Who is that Bill?

Bill: A neutral third party, like an arbitrator.

KSL: We should be able to solve our own problems. An arbitrator could overrule our decisions or change our policies. Who knows what damage these outsiders might do?

Bill: You always paint such a negative picture about outsiders. I am sure they aren't as bad as you think. You really should work on that dark side.

Are you aware that KS lawyers are claiming that just cause doesn't apply to any contract non-renewals?

splitting hairs with you...

Bill: You're right. The loyalty rule has never been enforced, so why make a big deal out of it? Let's go back to my concern about KS' obligation to discipline only for just cause. So far, it is obvious that KS supervisors don't know what just cause means and that some KS rules defy just cause application.

KSL: There's more?

Bill: Just one last thing. Are you aware that KS is claiming that just cause doesn't apply to any contract non-renewals?

KSL: Well, yes. KS must be allowed to non-renew the contracts of employees whose work is unsatisfactory.

Agenda items and notes on the 2/20 KS/KSFA consultation meeting

1. DISCIPLINE

a. *Philosophy*: In order for discipline to support the KS mission, it should be consistently applied and comply with management's leadership principles. Supervisors should be told what kinds of situations are best managed through discipline and what kinds are better handled by other means. Educational institutions thrive on innovative and creative energies. Discipline, while necessary to set bounds to limit extreme behaviors, can damage the creative spirit and frustrate innovation if it is overbearing or its bounds are unclear. Furthermore, discipline should not be the weapon of choice to solve every problem. Discipline is a double-edge sword. Each disciplinary rule, while intended to solve a particular problem, creates new difficulties which can be more injurious than the potential problem targeted. In addition to the inevitable problems associated with the notification, training, and enforcement of any new disciplinary rule, there are also acceptance problems that rule-makers rarely observe or correct. Disciplinary rules:

- (1) Increase supervisory workload and monitoring responsibilities,
- (2) May adversely affect supervisor-employee relationships and morale,
- (3) Are intrusive
- (4) Restrict options, and
- (5) May have many unintended effects.

Because disciplinary rules have so many negative and uncontrollable influences, they should be the last resort method to correct problems which threaten the safe or efficient execution of KS' mission.

(Current Situation: KS does not have an explicitly-stated discipline philosophy. As a result, disciplinary rules are extensive and vary from department to department as individual supervisors develop them to fit their management style.)

b. *Notice*: KS leadership should be sure that their supervisors understand their discipline philosophy and that employees are fully informed of behaviors that may be subject to discipline. To keep employees fully aware of discipline rules, it would help if:

(1) The number of rules subjecting employees to discipline were limited. (God only has ten commandments. If He/She had any more, we couldn't remember them.)

(2) Those rules were clearly identified as disciplinary and consolidated in a single book (such as the Employee Handbook). When new disciplinary rules need to be published, they should be conspicuously identified as disciplinary rules and distributed by a method which confirms individual notification.

(3) The publication of those rules was controlled by a single KS office and that any additions to those rules required CEO approval.

(Current Situation: Hundreds of rules with possible disciplinary applications are addressed (really buried) in the Employee Handbook. Due to the overwhelming number and breadth of rules contained in the handbook, few employees have studied it well enough to understand most of its disciplinary consequences. In addition to the Employee Handbook, KSFA has a contractual obligation (per Section 20.1) to abide by an ever-expanding (and not centrally controlled) pile of Administrative Memoranda some of which are issued without higher level management knowledge. Of the 302 pages of Administrative Memoranda recently forwarded to KSFA, we believe that less than 50 pages legitimately qualify for that classification. KS has made little or no effort to make its disciplinary rules comprehensible to its employees. It appears that the primary purpose of such rules is to have legal authority to go after selected offenders who are too clever to be dealt with for the real reasons. As a result, only two KS em-

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ployees are even vaguely aware of all of KS' disciplinary rules.)

c. *Enforcement*:. The KS leadership should ensure that discipline is enforced evenhandedly. To do this, management should establish procedures to ensure that (prior to publication) each disciplinary rule is conducive to evenhanded enforcement. Among other things, this would imply that proscribed behaviors are:

(1) Limited to a smaller more manageable number,

(2) Clearly and narrowly defined (not subject to multiple interpretations), and

(3) Observable and readily capable of being monitored.

(Current Situation: KS' tolerance of rules that are incapable of evenhanded enforcement has contributed to middle management's disrespect for that principle. Many of our supervisors do not understand that without evenhanded enforcement, there are no "rules." To single out "A" for punishment when it is known that many others are equally guilty of violating the same rule is to punish "A" for no rule at all. Some of our rules are unobservable and ambiguous. For example: Failure to demonstrate "loyalty to KS" is not easily observed or monitored. It would be very labor-intensive and intrusive to monitor every employee's loyalty. Therefore, it is impossible to enforce evenhandedly. In practice, only a supervisor out to get someone for some other reasons would use this rule. All others will ignore it. How can such rules help KS accomplish its mission?)

2. *BRAIN DRAIN*.

Last month, the parents of a very bright tenth grade Kamehameha student asked at least one teacher (Mr. Follmer) to complete three evaluation forms on their child and forward them to Punahou, 'Iolani and Mid-Pacific Institute (see attached). The parents explained that the option of attending one of these three schools would not have been available if it were not for the possibility of tuition assistance from the Ke Ali'i Pauahi Foundation.

If tuition assistance for other schools from KS or the foundation is available or being considered, we would like the KS leadership to be aware of some of the possible affects this could have on the classrooms on the Kapalama Campus. Some of these can be controlled or mitigated but others cannot. These anticipated effects are based on years of observing the daily classroom behaviors of our students.

What kinds of Kamehameha students will apply for tuition at Punahou, 'Iolani or MidPac and be accepted? Obviously not our problem students or those with limited or average abilities. These schools are in the business of recruiting and accepting the very best talent our community has to offer. Punahou has a 50-year history of unashamedly raiding other schools for their most talented students, athletes, and musicians. (Punahou and 'Iolani are also famous for raiding teacher talent.) Why do they do it? What do these students provide that cannot be achieved by having an outstanding faculty, facilities and programs? The answer is student leadership.

Every school (and every classroom) that strives for excellence needs to admit and retain a critical mass of excellent students to ignite the talents of ordinary students. The excellent students set the standards for the others and give a living example of what hard work can achieve. Teachers know when that critical mass is reaching the low end when they are presenting a challenging but essential concept and hear a student argue "Why are you no one understands. It's too hard." and the class appears to agree. It's normal to have a few whiners in every class whose mission in life it is to lower the work ethic of the group so that they can succeed without trying. It only takes a small number of excellent students who are excited about learning and are willing to work to set an example that will inspire the others to follow them. Sometimes one or two really excellent students can provide the spark a class needs. However, the classroom dynamic governing student

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expectations is complex and if the talent differential between the leaders and the masses is excessive, the leaders will be labeled “nerds” and ignored. The bottom line is that Punahou is right. The more talent you stuff in a class, the more learning that takes place at all levels of abilities. Even 50 years after high school, most people can remember the leaders in their class and how we measured our performance against their example. Student

leaders are precious school assets and their presence is desperately important to ordinary students.

b. *School Image.* If Kamehameha is foolish enough to ship its student leadership to other schools to reduce its cost per pupil ratio, what will become the public perception of our school? It’s depressing, but here are a few terms that will sum it up: mediocre, last choice, blue collar education.

— notes compiled by Bill Follmer, Unit 9-10

“It’s the rule,” said the mad hatter

QUESTION: When is a rule not a rule?

ANSWER: When it’s not the rule but an exception.

EXAMPLE: Suppose Inquisitions Incorporated (II), a charitable foundation dependent upon public donations that provides counseling to spouses whose partners don’t appreciate them, has an obnoxious employee called Willie. You know Willie. He’s a short little annoying fellow who is always in the way of corporate visionaries. II wants to drop Willie from their organization but, as II is dependent upon public support, they are reluctant to pass a rule against anti-visionary annoying little people. No problem, selective enforcement of vague rules to the rescue, II cuts off Willie because a member of his immediate family violated its conflict of interest policy. Specifically, a spouse of a great grandchild had a business relationship with another company that was not in the “best interests” of II. Willie feels that the rare enforcement of this “rule” had nothing to do with the real reason why he has been dumped. Willie has just learned of the danger of allowing vaguely-worded policies to remain in force. II, however, knew that “rule” would come in handy someday.

Just for fun, take a look at *KS Policy 410 [C] - Conflict of Interest - Staff*

Scope and Terms:

Para. 4: Failure to comply with this policy

or any applicable procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or termination of employment.

Definitions:

Para. 3a: A Conflict of Interest is defined as an activity or relationship with another company or individual with whom KS maintains or may establish a business relationship that would result in questionable ethics, would not be in the best interest of KS, or would result in personal profit or advantage to a staff or his/her immediate family.

Para. 4: Immediate Family. For purpose of this policy, the following is [sic] considered to be immediate family: a) spouse or reciprocal beneficiary; b) son, stepson, daughter, stepdaughter (and their spouses); c) parent/stepparent; d) brother, stepbrother, sister, stepsister (and their spouses); e) mother-in-law, father-in-law; f) grandchildren and great grandchildren (and their spouses); g) grandparents and great-grandparents (and their spouses).

QUESTION: Do you suppose that KS will use this policy to get Willie?

ANSWER: Probably not. KS is not vindictive, and as long as Willie’s contract has a “just cause” provision, the evenhanded enforcement requirement will protect him.

— Bill Follmer, unit 11-12

Viewpoints

Items on these pages do not represent official positions taken by KSFA

A book will tell our story: progress report

Aloha KSFA members!

Jan has asked me to provide some information as to where things stand on our project to document the years of controversy at KSBE. As you know, this project has received the enthusiastic support of all the groups within the 'Ohana Council, including KSFA, Nā Kumu, Nā Pua, the Board of Presidents and the student leadership group.

I have now conducted and transcribed interviews with approximately 65 persons. These are, to a large extent, focused on people connected to the Kapālama Campus. In a number of cases I have had multiple interviews with the same person.

In early December, I began to gather material from people involved in Nā Pua or who otherwise played an off-campus role. For example, I was able to meet with Pinky Thompson and Rocky Tokuhara shortly before they passed away. Over Christmas vacation, I interviewed 10 people on the Big Island for a total of about 27 hours. This series of interviews included Nona Beamer, whose letter to the Supreme Court justices in May, 1997, is seen by many as an ignition point for much of what occurred that month. I also had three interviews with Duchy Saffery '57, who had a leading role in Nā Pua.

I have not been to Maui or Kaua'i, places that include a large number of people who were involved in the controversy, particularly alumni. Nor have I really begun interviews at Kawaiaha'o Plaza or met with other key players, including the removed trustees and people who worked closely with them.

As you surely know, oral history is a time-consuming process. Each interview needs to be prepared, transcribed, returned to the interviewee for corrections and then finalized. Clean copies of the transcription will in time be placed on permanent record in the Archives. I am currently working with two professional transcribers who are tak-

ing some of the load. However, anything of a particularly sensitive nature or which includes Hawaiian language stays with me.

These interviews so far have been enormously fruitful, and I would expect interviews from around the compass to be even more so. It is a deeply moving experience to hear the voices of our community: theirs tears, their laughter, their pains, their joys.

Another outcome of my work this year is a chronology of events. This includes information from the published record as well as data generated by interviews. The results will be both a long-view perspective on the school's history in main, and a more detailed, day-to-day account of what took place during the years of controversy.

Part of the project involves archival storage. Last summer Janet Zisk and I began collecting and organizing materials related to the controversy. Documents were received from representatives of Nā Kumu, Nā Pua and KSFA as well as many other sources. The goal for this archival work is to create a repository of hard copy documents and to convert them as well into computer files. Two KS graduates, Cyd Gaspar '99 and Ciara Lacey '98, assisted us in this work which is on-going. Our new archival assistant, Candace Lee, will be working closely with me in this endeavor.

The work this year was significantly delayed by the lengthy but necessary conversations we had with the trustees regarding their concerns with the project. Those discussions were not concluded until the end of the first quarter, which meant that nearly 25% of my reassignment time was devoted to memos and meetings about the project rather than focused work on the project itself.

Another delay, and one that continues, has been caused by computer difficulties causing serious damage and deletion of the interview material. A significant amount of time has gone into

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trying to recover material that was thought secure. In this work I have had much help from ISD people on campus who believe that my system is now stabilized. Special thanks to Mimi Wong who has been a tireless helper.

Now about the goal, first articulated by Nā Kumu in October, 2000, and later reaffirmed by the ‘Ohana Council: We are committed to telling the story of the controversy honestly, fairly and fully. The book will not have a single “voice,” pushing a single rigid point of view. It will accommodate multiple voices, a variety of views on the major issues. Not to do so would be to deny the very real and eminently understandable complexities and intricacies of the story as it developed. At every step along the way, there were legitimate differences of philosophy that expressed them-

selves in varying approaches to such things as educational change, trustee responsibility, legal strategy, and fidelity to the will of Pauahi. These differences flow very strongly through the interview material. Every effort will be made to depict and reflect these seriously argued questions from all relevant perspectives.

We believe that a book thus conceived and carried through will strengthen Princess Pauahi’s trust, and that it will facilitate and not disrupt healing. In fact we believe that the book will prove to be a vital step in the healing process, a book for every graduating student to read—and a book that will serve responsibly and productively to locate Kamehameha Schools in the wider community, as an important institution that has gone through trying times and has emerged the better and stronger for it.

— Kāwika Eyre, on leave of absence

STUDENT STRESS, THE BELL SCHEDULE, AND BLOCK SCHEDULING

Every day of the week, many of our typical college-bound juniors’ lives follow a harried schedule something like this:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 st Period 7:52 – 8:37 | Physics |
| 2 nd Period 8:44 – 9:31 | English |
| 3 rd Period 9:38 – 10:25 | Hawaiian History |
| 4 th Period 10:32 – 11:17 | Free |
| 5 th Period 11:24 – 12:09 | Lunch |
| 6 th Period 12:16 – 1:03 | Precalculus |
| 7 th Period 1:10 – 1:55 | Spanish III |
| 8 th Period 2:02 – 2:47 | Ceramics |
| 9 th Period 2:54 – 3:30 | Study Help in Math/Physics |

The next few hours might be taken up with sports practice, jogging to fulfill PE requirements, volleyball or football to blow off some built-up

tension, and an hour-long ride home. By 7 or 7:30 it is reasonable to expect that their bodies are clean and their tummies full. Now it is time to tackle the homework.

| | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Physics: Problem Set | 40 - 50 minutes |
| English: Revise Essay | 30 - 45 minutes |
| Hawaiian History: Reading | 20 – 30 minutes |
| Pre-Calculus: Problem Set | 1 – 1.25 hours |
| Spanish III: Workbook | <u>30 – 45 minutes</u> |
| Total Homework Time: 3 – 4 hours | |

They will hit the sack around 11:00 p.m. for about 7 hours of sleep at which time their day starts all over again. It would be difficult to argue that this is not a rigorous schedule although the student-to-student details will vary. How many of us could keep this up five days a week? The validity

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of this scenario might be challenged due to the very unscientific manner in which the data was collected, but I doubt that it is far from the mark.

Recently, ASKS leadership approached the administration with concerns about the burden of having so many classes each day and the attendant diversity of subjects to be dealt with in homework assignments each night. The students felt that the stress of having so many diverse topics to consider day in and day out was causing unnecessary stress and seriously affecting their performance because so little time and energy was available to devote to each subject each night.

Because of their concerns and the experiences of students who recently transferred to KS from schools operating under alternative scheduling models, the ASKS leaders have asked the administration to consider modifying the bell schedule. Short of reducing the graduation requirements and the number of periods each day, the solution to the students concern is most likely to be found in the hot-button issue –

BLOCK SCHEDULING

No doubt those bold capital letters drew the attention of many of you and significantly raised the blood pressure of a few. “Here we go again!” “Didn’t we slay that monster years ago?” Indeed, we did. At the time, there was precious little data upon which to judge the effects of block scheduling on student performance. So, based upon the very reasonable belief that the students have a valid concern and knowing that for some of you, this is a very contentious issue, I would like to revisit this issue to see what new information has accumulated in the past five years that was missing when we first looked at block scheduling in the mid-90s.

First, and I apologize to those of you already quite familiar with the terminology, let’s make sure we know what our words mean. Block scheduling is an alternative to the traditional 6 to 8 period school day. Actually, it is a few alternatives.

The 4x4 block schedule (sometimes referred

to as an Accelerated, Intensive, or Semester block) divides a 180 day school year into two 90 day semesters. In each of these semesters, students attend the same four 90-minute classes daily. In theory, a year’s worth of instruction is compressed into a semester. Over the course of a year (two semesters) the student completes the same 8 classes in the traditional schedule.

The A/B block (Alternate Day or Odd/Even) schedule spreads instruction over the entire 180 day school year but classes meet only every other day. This is a similar concept to the 4x4 block but with the students taking each course over a full academic year.

The modified A/B block schedule includes one or two (45 minute) periods that meet every day. These can be dispersed in various ways among the 90 minute block schedule classes.

The litany of pros and cons about block scheduling goes something like this (as described by the American Federation of Teachers):

The pros...

- Subject matter can be studied and learned in greater depth.
- Instruction is less fragmented, with greater time for serious discussions, cooperative learning, labs, groups work, and projects.
- Allows for extended and variable instruction for students who may need additional support or have difficulty learning in short “sound bites”.
- Teachers work with fewer students at a time, allowing for more personalized instruction and an improved school atmosphere.
- Longer preparation periods allow for honing of lessons, more collaboration with colleagues and more time to work in one-on-one sessions with students.

The cons...

- Cognitive science shows that regular review over a long period of time is beneficial to long-term memory of subject matter. Block scheduling which compresses a year-long course into a semes-

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ter diminishes opportunities for review.

- Ninety minutes is a long time to hold students' attention and, typically, few teachers are properly trained in how to use this period of time effectively

- Missing one day of school can potential mean the loss of the equivalent of two days of instruction

"... block scheduling created a learning climate that was quieter, less stressful, less harried and more relaxed."

So, what effect does block scheduling have on a student's stress level and academic achievement? Six years ago when we first addressed this issue, there were few longitudinal studies to turn to because there were very few schools on block scheduling for a sufficient amount of time to make for meaningful results. Currently, there is a wealth of data reviewing effects on discipline, graduation rates, attendance, grades, SAT/ACT and Advanced Placement scores.

I have drawn my data exclusively from sources on the Internet. While by no means comprehensive, I believe these data to be representative of the whole because there are a sufficient number of recent review articles among the information I have perused to provide a reasonably comprehensive overview.

In a review of studies published as recently as April, 2001, researchers at the University of Michigan have concluded that "an undisputed effect of block scheduling is that it makes school less stressful" for students, teachers and administrators. "... block scheduling created a learning climate that was quieter, less stressful, less harried and more relaxed."

A seemingly uniform consequence of block scheduling is a significant decrease in truancy, increased GPA, and higher graduation rates. However, these data are of limited value because they are subject to a broad range of local attitudes and

conditions that make comparisons between studies difficult.

Three much less subjective measures of the effect of block scheduling on student learning are the SAT/ACT scores, Advanced Placement test scores, and state-administered end-of-course (EOC) testing.

States administering EOC tests, including Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, and Texas, have reported a mixed bag of

results. The most thorough data set comes from Texas where there are a multitude of schools in various types of block and traditional schedules. Students in a 4x4 block were significantly less likely to pass the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills tests than any other type of schedule including an A/B, modified A/B, or traditional 6, 7, or 8 period schedule. However, students on the A/B and modified A/B schedules performed as well or better than those on the traditional schedules. North Carolina schools on the 4x4 block have shown no significant differences in EOC test scores between block and non-block schools, although there is

In keeping with the new open spirit at Kamehameha, the Faculty Forum at the end of each newsletter is open to those who wish to communicate with the rest of the faculty. Please feel welcome to submit a piece. Viewpoints expressed here do not represent official positions taken by KSFA.

Viewpoints

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Block scheduling, continued from page 12

some question about statistical ‘adjustments’ to these data. Students on the 4x4 block schedule in Indiana (Angola) showed significant improvement when EOC tests when the tests were administered at the end of each semester.

One of the most frequently cited studies by

The College Board found a consistent trend in student performance: A/B > Traditional > 4x4.

block scheduling antagonists is that by David Bateson of 30,000 10th graders in British Columbia, Canada. His study reported that students in year-long science courses significantly out-performed those taking science in semester-long blocks (4x4). What many proponents of the Bateson study fail to note when they discuss this data is that students on the year-long A/B block schedule out-performed those on traditional schedules. Unfortunately, these tests were administered at the end of the school year, which was several months after the 4x4 block schedule students had finished their studies, thus confounding measurements of learning with those of retention. However, EOC tests in Georgia also demonstrated a negative impact of 4x4 scheduling on math and science scores, with little or no effect on language arts and social studies scores.

The underperformance of students in the 4x4 block and the divergence between the 4x4 and A/B block schedules persists when student performance on the SAT/ACT and AP tests is evaluated. In Texas, 4x4 block students were out-performed on SAT/ACT tests by those on the A/B and traditional schedules, with the A/B block students performing as well as students on traditional schedules with 7 or 8 periods daily. Unfortunately, these data did not report the effects of verbal versus math scores separately. The state of Connecticut has re-

ported improvement in both math and verbal scores by students in either the 4x4 or A/B block. Interestingly, they noted that neither of these formats improved the scores of students who were not college bound. A similar finding was reported for predominantly rural and inner-city regions of Georgia where the SAT/ACT scores of students under 4x4 block scheduling were significantly lower than those on a traditional schedule.

The effect on Advanced Placement scores has been thoroughly evaluated by the College Board. In a survey of nearly 600,000 students taking AP exams in Calculus, Biology, History, and English, the College Board found a consistent trend in student performance: A/B > Traditional > 4x4.

When discussing the pros and cons of block scheduling it is apparent that one must distinguish between 4x4 and A/B scheduling models. The data clearly suggest that the A/B scheduling model can

“Students concentrated on fewer subjects and had fewer teachers to please.”

significantly reduce stresses on the student by reducing the diversity of subjects addressed each day in class. With the possible exception of students not intending to go to college, studies have shown the A/B block schedule to be superior to the 4x4 block and traditional schedule at improving student performance on SAT/ACT, AP, and EOC tests.

I am not a proponent of change for the sake of change or because ‘everybody else is doing it’. But, the data are sufficiently robust to suggest that the issue of block scheduling should be revisited and the reasonable and sincere concerns of our students given serious consideration.

— Larry Mordan, Unit 11-12

Viewpoints

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Speaking of standardized testing ...

— an excerpt from *The Schools Our Children Deserve*, by Alife Kohn, quoted in the talk list of the National Council of Teachers of English.

“Linda Darling-Hammond offers this analogy: Suppose it has been decided that hospital standards must be raised, so all patients must now have their

Shortly before the thermometers are inserted, the doctors run around giving out huge doses of aspirin and lots of cold drinks. Remarkably, then, it turns out that no one is running a fever!

temperatures taken on a regular basis. Shortly before the thermometers are inserted, the doctors run around giving out huge doses of aspirin and lots of cold drinks. Remarkably, then, it turns out that no one is running a fever! The quality of hospital care is at an all-time high! What is really going on, of course, is completely different from providing good healthcare and assessing it accurately—just as teaching to the test is completely different from providing good instruction and assessing it accurately. ‘By focusing on improving tests scores,’ two researchers warn, ‘only test scores, and not schools themselves, will improve.’*

Notice that scores typically plummet whenever a state or district decides to administer a new test. (And the headlines read: Our schools are failing! Our students are ignorant!) After a few years, the scores begin to rise as students and teachers get used to the test. (And the headlines read: Our

schools are improving! tougher standards are effective!) Another kind of evidence comes from stories like the one about a junior high school in New Jersey where an intensive test-prep effort succeeded in producing the highest scores in the area—after which one third of the students required remedial classes when they got to high school. They weren’t helped to learn; they were helped to get good scores, which did them no good and may even have done them considerable harm.

What all this means can be summarized in a sentence: ‘At best, high test scores for a given school or district are probably meaningless; at worst, they’re actually bad news because of the kind of teaching that was done to produce those scores.’**

* Noble, Audrey J., and Mary Lee Smith. “Old and New Beliefs about Measurement-Driven Re-

‘At best, high test scores for a given school or district are probably meaningless; at worst, they’re actually bad news because of the kind of teaching that was done to produce those scores.’

form: ‘The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same.’” CSE Technical Report 373. Los Angeles: National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), 1994. (Available at <http://cresst96.cse.ucla.edu/Reports/TECH373.PDF>)

— contributed by Jan Becket, Unit 11-12