

## **West Hawaii Explorations Academy - PCS MID-CYCLE PROGRESS REPORT**



**73-4460 Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway. #105  
Kailua-Kona, Hawaii 96749**

**Public Charter School**

**March 2nd, 2020**

HAWAII ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AND

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR SCHOOLS

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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## **I: Student/Community Profile Data**

### **Include the following:**

- An updated student/community profile that includes the following: a brief, general description of the school and its programs, along with the school's vision and mission
- Schoolwide student goals and learning outcomes
- Student demographics
- Faculty and staff demographics

**Note: Use the current student/community profile and summary that has been updated annually since the last full visit and other annual progress reports.**

### **The School**

The History: The origin of WHEA dates back to the early 1990's when a Konawaena High School Teacher, Bill Woerner, realized his students' experiences on the Solar Car Team far outweighed what students learned in his traditional physics classroom. His notable solar car team raced across Australia which was later portrayed in a full featured film; "Race to the Sun," starring Halle Berry. Bill believed that the hands-on and project based approach to teaching and learning science was a better way to accomplish authentic education than traditional science classes. He received the national Presidential Award for science education that provided him the momentum needed to start his own educational venture. WHEA began as a Hawai'i DOE school-within-a-school (Konawaena High School) and continued from 1994 to 2000. The school received its charter from the Hawai'i State Board of Education (BOE) on May 5, 2000 as Hawai'i's first public chartered high school. On August 14, 2000, WHEA opened becoming the first "start-up" charter school in Hawai'i. In the fall of 2004, a WHEA Middle School program was approved by the BOE. The Middle school began by admitting 7th grade first followed by 6th graders in 2008 the following year. It is currently a public charter middle and high school serving students from grades 6th through 12th.

WHEA is located in the Natural Energy Lab of Hawaii Authority (NELHA) Park, commonly called OTEC. The school is one of 48 tenants in the NELHA Park, most being small to medium sized aquaculture, water desalination and alternative energy focused companies. The benefits to being a NELHA tenant include access to resources the host park provides such as ample sunshine, fresh water, and both surface and cold deep sea ocean water. The same resources that attract tenants to the NELHA location. Many WHEA students utilize the sun and sea in the on-campus projects.

WHEA's popularity began to grow in the community when the word got out that it wasn't just a "beach" school anymore. The curriculum had evolved into an alternative integrative hands-on experience that gives students the opportunity to pursue science projects that are personally meaningful and interesting to them. In order to increase the school's capacity to serve more students and accommodate additional projects, in 2014-15, WHEA's partner

foundation, The Exploration Foundation, built a new campus which is located at the top of the NELAH host park. This new campus is an incredible upgrade in almost every aspect, including but not limited to teaching spaces, computer labs, a dedicated STEM Lab, an administration building, parking, bathrooms, play court and amphitheatre. The new campus is on approximately 4 acres and includes areas that can be developed based on the future aspirations of the school.

The Program: The West Hawaii Explorations Academy or WHEA has been an incubator Project Based Learning (PBL) laboratory school dedicated to developing innovative, hands-on educational methods since its inception in 1994. The WHEA staff believe that the PBL educational program is a dynamic pedagogical approach in which students actively explore real-world problems and challenges. Their students will acquire a deep understanding of meaningful content through conceptualizing, designing, building, and producing worthwhile projects. While many WHEA projects use NELHA as a unique learning environment, the larger goal is to focus on the community and the world's environmental challenges such as global warming, coral reef destruction and the future of robots.

The school's Vision and Mission focus on the **cultivation of capable critical thinkers who can solve real problems**. Investing in student empowerment will lead to the graduation of productive, well educated citizens. This is evident in the decision-making process used to propose and implement projects and to impact schoolwide and community success. This is also seen in a student's ability to design and guide their own education. Student-selected projects have continually been recognized as one of WHEA's greatest strengths. This strengthens student individuality and enhances personal as well as academic growth. Since students are the ones who select problems to solve, they can choose opportunities to determine the purpose and focus of projects. In this way students are invested in their education and are allowed to recognize successes as their own. One important aspect which further emphasizes the critical role of students is the hands-on components of the curriculum. When students create things with their own hands, a deep level of pride and investment naturally follows. This is also one of the most overt physical manifestations of the curriculum which is immediately evident once one steps foot on campus.

Since **stewardship and solutions of real life challenges** are key components, WHEA looks to the greater community to maintain authenticity and connections to the community. WHEA has successfully involved the community since its inception that has allowed the students to develop projects such as the Blacktip Reef Shark Lagoon project, FIRST Robotics and Deep Sea Cold Water Agriculture strawberries. There is no hope of authenticity or arriving at real-world solutions for problems unless there is a bridge from the school into the greater community. WHEA has built this bridge with multiple mentors and professionals in many fields who regularly visit the WHEA campus and host students as they venture off campus.

Community conflicts and needs are often the inspiration and genesis for many projects as well. Projects have evolved to require mentor input and must establish their worth on a global scale and locally as part of the proposal process.

Through the process of designing and developing projects the students not only become critical thinkers and problem solvers, they also achieve many of the required “life skills” necessary to be successful adults. The curriculum teaches goal setting and time management skills through the Time Management Planner (TMS). Students also learn to become independent thinkers who can communicate effectively with a variety of audiences. When working on projects, they must learn to work as a team which requires them to honor and value the ideas of others. Not only do the students have to be responsible for their own learning, they also impact the entire project team as well.

WHEA’s unique PBL curriculum manifest different characteristics in the middle and high school but both require student-focused projects. All projects are standards-based and incorporate the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards required by Hawaii’s Board of Education. The standards are embedded throughout the entire project development process. Content integration is critical in order to mirror the real world. The school supplements the project learning with some more traditionally standards-based classes such as math, history, and health. It should be noted that although WHEA does not “teach to the test,” their students perform well on the Strive HI assessments, often out performing the State in proficiency.

WHEA is such a small school so in order to meet the State’s High School graduation requirements it offers after school and online classes such as after school art, physics, chemistry, online foreign language through Rosetta Stone and credit recovery through Acellus. Many of the seniors enroll in the Running Start Program at the local community college where they are able to earn both high school and college credits. Last year WHEA started a Surf Team that is one of the first public schools in Hawai’i to do so. Students may also participate in extracurricular activities such as sports at district schools nearby.

The Philosophy: WHEA has a unique approach to education, valuing authenticity and student direction. This is defined by the school’s Vision, Mission and Beliefs.

***Vision:*** *Students become productive and responsible practitioners of collaboration and stewardship, evolving into lifelong critical thinkers who are confident in their ability to solve complex, real world problems.*

***Mission:*** *To facilitate authentic learning through integrative, hands-on, self-selected projects related to real world challenges.*

***Beliefs:*** *Students learn best when confronted with meaningful, real-world challenges where they have a stake and voice in the selection of both the issues themselves and the means by which the issues are addressed. The type and depth of learning, as well as the quality, is enhanced through integrative studies. The use of integrative, project-driven curriculum increases motivation, stimulates critical thinking and problem-solving, and prepares students to face a rapidly changing world. Smaller learning environments where students feel safe, important and cared for are significantly more effective than larger learning environments.*

The school has also adopted both the DOE's General Learner Outcomes (GLO's) and the HA: Breath and believes that both are very relevant to their students overall success at WHEA.

### **General Learner Outcomes (GLOs)**

The following General Learner Outcomes (GLOs) are expected of every student participating in the curriculum at WHEA . While participating in classes, assignments and projects students will continue to develop skills in the following areas:

**Self Directed Learner:** Being responsible for one's own learning.

**Community Contributor:** Understand the importance of being able to work together.

**Complex Thinker:** Ability to be involved in complex thinking and problem solving.

### **Quality Producer**

Ability to recognize and produce quality performance and products.

### **Effective Communicator**

Ability to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences.

### **Effective and Ethical User of Technology**

Ability to use a variety of technology effectively and ethically.

Over the past several years the school has also started to focus on place based learning and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). The DOE's Na Hopena A'o Statements provide another important aspect of a students learning at WHEA.

### **Na Hopena A'o Statements: HA: BREATH**

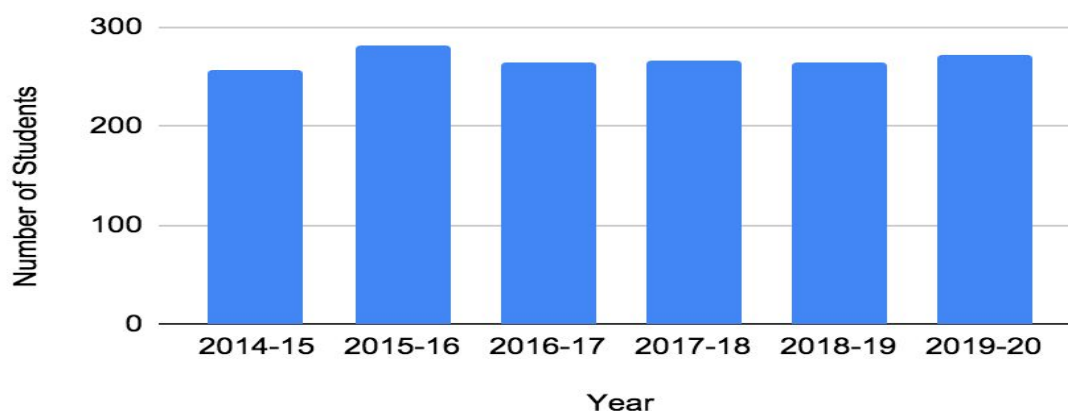
- Strengthened Sense of **B**elonging
- Strengthened Sense of **R**esponsibility
- Strengthened Sense of **E**xcellence
- Strengthened Sense of **A**loha
- Strengthened Sense of **T**otal Well-being

- Strengthened Sense of **H**awaii

Enrollment: In 1994, WHEA's original enrollment was 53 students in grades 10-12 which doubled by the time the school was chartered in 2000. Enrollment has steadily increased since 2007-2008 SY until it peaked in 2015-2016 SY at an enrollment total of 282 students. The move to a new, larger campus enabled the enrollment increase. However, staff and leadership found that the curriculum too difficult to implement with 282 students. Since then the enrollment has stabilized between 265 to 270 students. This year, 2019-20, the enrollment was 271 with 111 middle schoolers (37 students per grade) and 160 high schoolers. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1:

### WHEA Enrollment from 2015-2020



Both the middle and high school have been operating at full capacity with waiting lists for the past several years. The increase in interest over the years is partly attributable to the staff's diligence in identifying and redesigning areas of the curriculum to best meet the needs of the students, leading to increased demand from the community.

### Waiting List Data

School Year	Grade & Number of Students
2018-19	6th - 25 7th - 30 8th - 24 9th - 4 10th - 10 11th - 0

	12th - 0
2019-20	6th - 76 7th - 50 8th - 16 9th - 15 10th - 0 11th - 0 12th - 0

### The Community

The school is part of the West Hawaii District, which is mainly in Kailua-Kona. The majority of students who attend WHEA are from the West Hawaii region, which is primarily Kailua-Kona, Holualoa, and Keauhou. However, students who are able to catch the county bus have also started attending WHEA. These students come from North Kohala, Waikoloa, Honoka'a, Waimea, Kealahou, Captain Cook, Honaunau and Ocean View.

The Kailua-Kona area has a population of approximately 11,975 according to the 2010 US Census Bureau. The local economy is primarily driven by the visitor industry and small business commerce. Other local industries in West Hawaii include agriculture (coffee, macadamia nuts, tropical fruits and flowers), real estate, construction, communication services, and healthcare. According to the 2010 Census the ethnic makeup of West Hawaii is 52% Caucasian, 19% Asian, 17% Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, 4% Native American, 6% African American, and 12% Hispanic. (Totals add up to more than 100% due to multiple reporting of ethnicities.) The median age is 43.9 years old with a median household income of \$71,815. The population below the poverty level is 10.9%.

#### **2010 US Census Bureau: West Hawaii Demographics**

<b>Total Population</b>	West Hawaii - 33,321	Big Island - 189,191
<b>Ethnicity</b>	West Hawaii	Big Island
White	52%	34%
Hawaiian	17%	13%
Asian	19%	23%
Native American	4%	6%



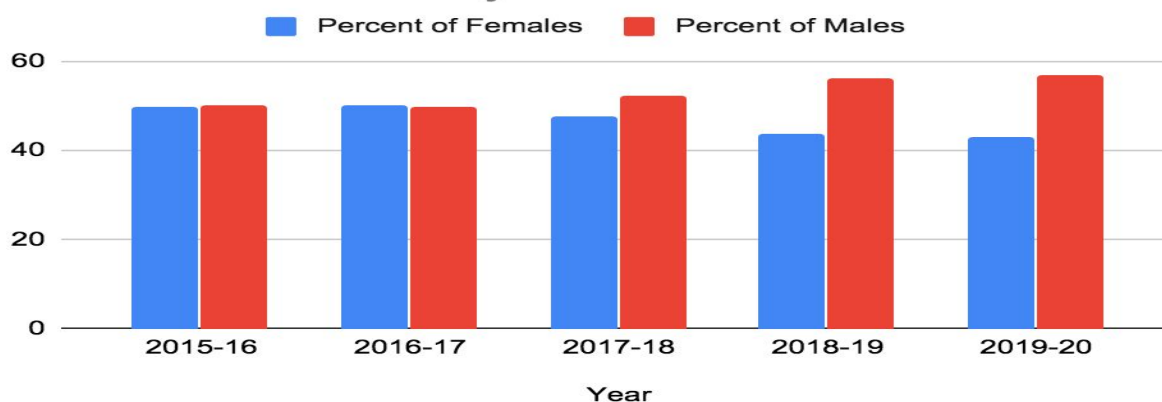
Black	6%	8%
Hispanic	12%	12%

### The Students

The majority of WHEA students who enter middle school come from the surrounding elementary schools such as Kahakai, Holuloa, Konaweana and Kealakehe. The feeder schools for the high school are primarily WHEA's middle school with about a third of the students coming to the high school. The other two thirds are from Kona Pacific Charter School, Kealakehe Middle, Konawaena Middle and Waikalua Middle & Elem. Many of these students do depend on the county bus system (Hele On) which provide inexpensive transportation directly to and from the school.

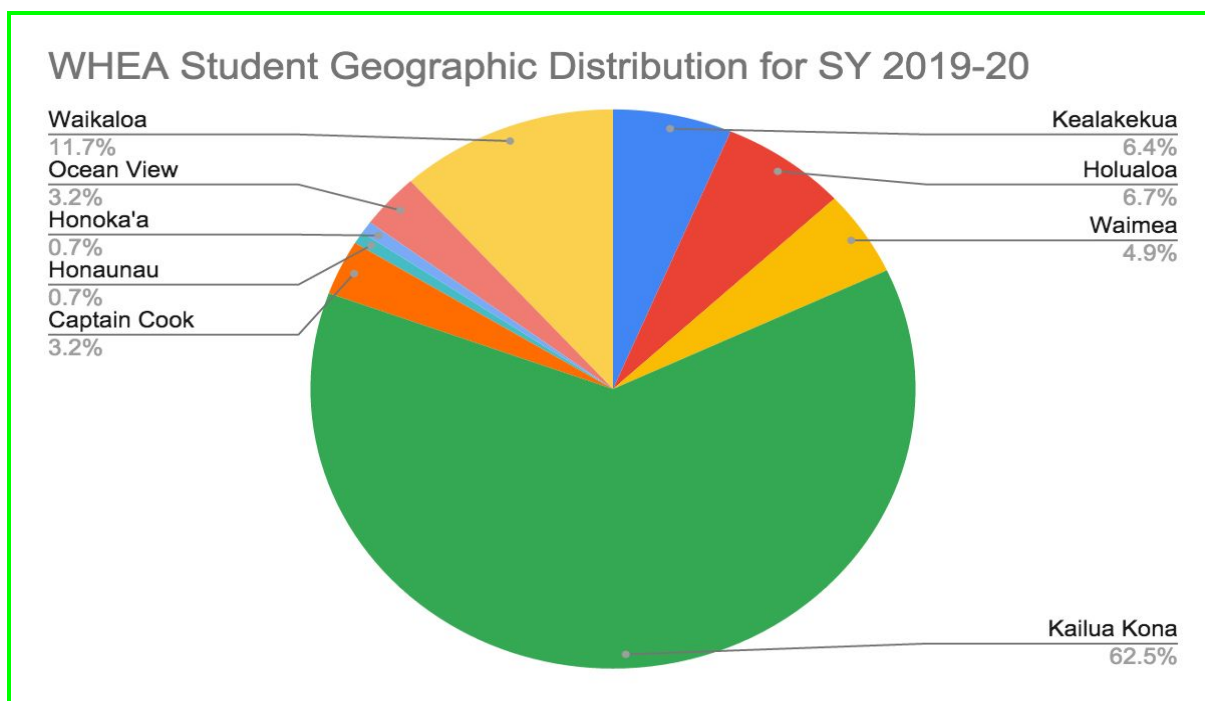
Enrollment by Gender: Over the years gender enrollment has fluctuated with the ratio of male and female close to 50% in school years 2015-16 and 2016-17. Currently there appears to be a small increase (14 students) in the male student population since 2017. It is difficult to explain this other than there are more male students interested in the project-based hands-on learning curriculum the school offers.

### WHEA's Enrollment by Gender: 2015-2020



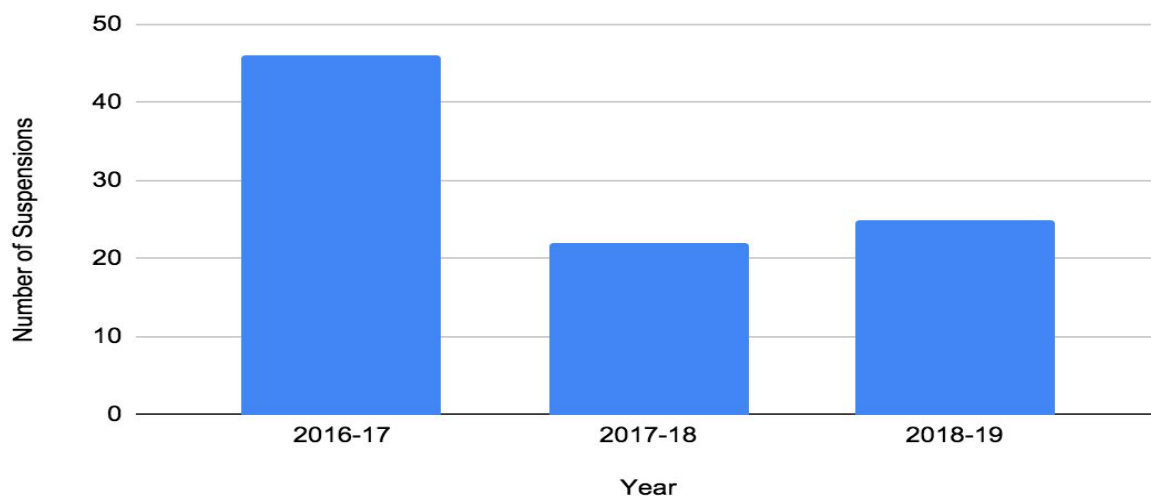
Student Geographic Distribution: The majority of WHEA students live in the Kailua-Kona area at 62.5%. The second largest population lives in Waikalua with 11.7%. In general the students are coming to WHEA from the following school districts: Konawaena, Kealakehe and

Waikaloo. A very small percentage travel from Honoka'a (northeast) and Ocean View (south) which are about an hour away.



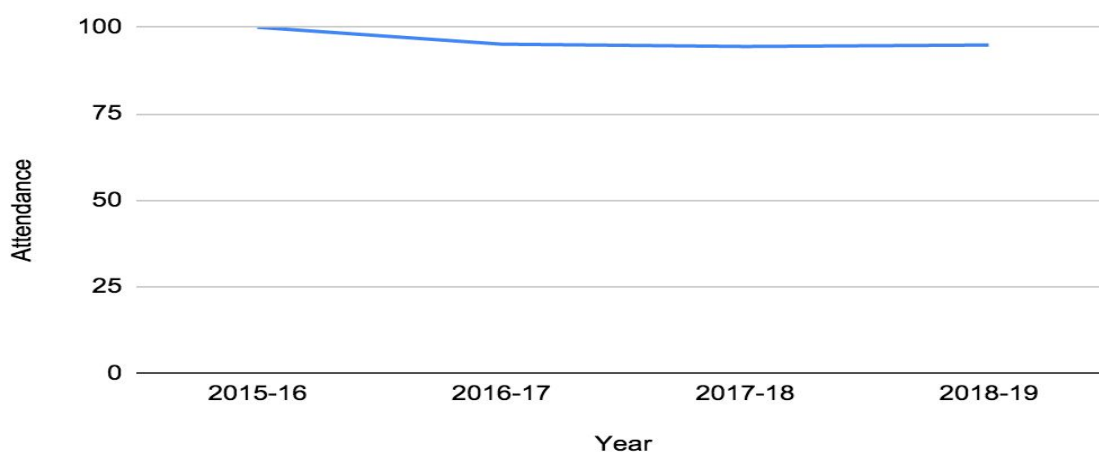
Discipline: WHEA has been following the DOE's Chapter 19 Discipline Policy until last school year. It has been required to document all suspensions in the DOE's ECSSS and Infinite Campus. The data show that the number of suspensions has dropped dramatically over the past two years. This can be attributed to the new WHEA Discipline Guidelines which focus on set consequences and restorative practices. It could also be due to the new staff position created in SY 2017-18 to manage student discipline called the Student Behavior Specialist.

### WHEA Number of Suspensions: 2016-2019



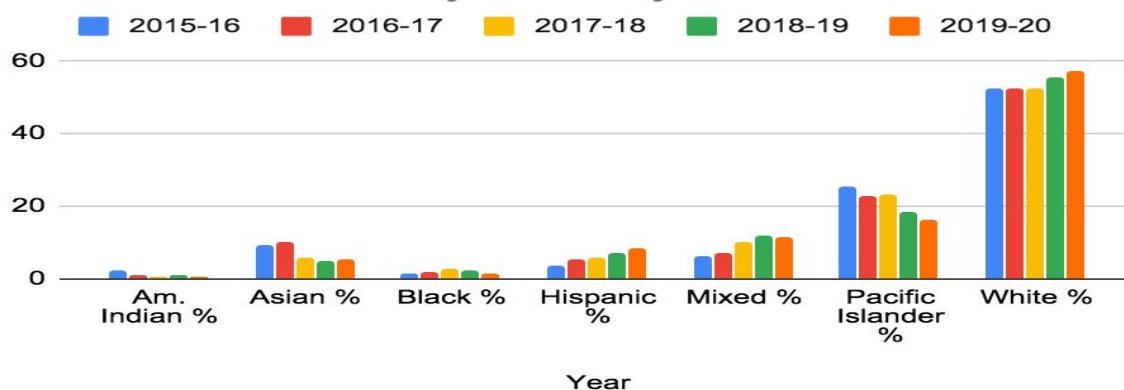
Attendance: WHEA has maintained an average student attendance rate of about 95% for the past three years. In general the school has had very few problems with non attendance.

### WHEA Attendance: 2015-2019



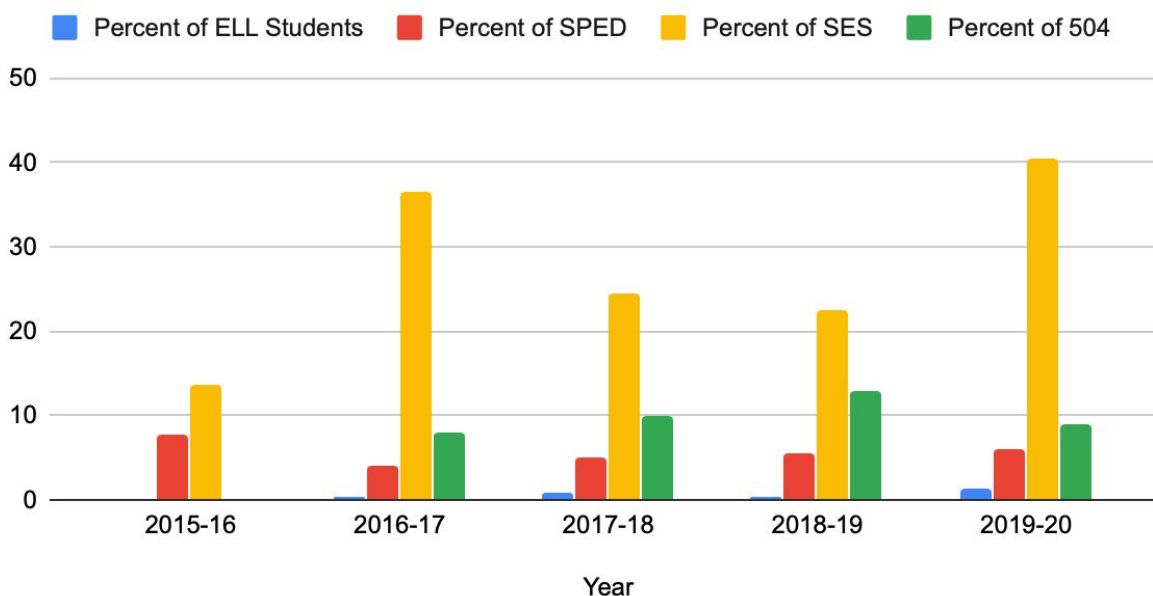
Enrollment by Ethnicity: WHEA's largest ethnic group has always been the Caucasian or White students followed by the Pacific Islanders which include part Hawaiian students. This tends to mirror the US Census Bureau information regarding the ethnic makeup of the West Hawaii population. However, the school's population of White students is a little higher at 57.09% than the area (52%).

### WHEA Enrollment by Ethnicity: 2015-2020



Enrollment by Special Needs, 504 & SES: Although WHEA is a public school, the number of special needs students is low in proportion to the other surrounding public schools. The ELL population has always been small, between 1-2%, consisting of Japanese or Russian speaking students. The percent of SPED students has ranged from 4 to 7%, currently it is 6% of the student population. The number of students receiving 504 accommodations is also small. The range is between 8 and 13%, this year 9% of the population has a 504 plan. The number of SES or Free and Reduced Lunch students has increased over the last 5 years from 14 to 43%. However this percentage isn't high enough for the school to receive Title I funding.

### WHEA's Percent of ELL Students, Percent of SPED, Percent of SES and Percent of 504

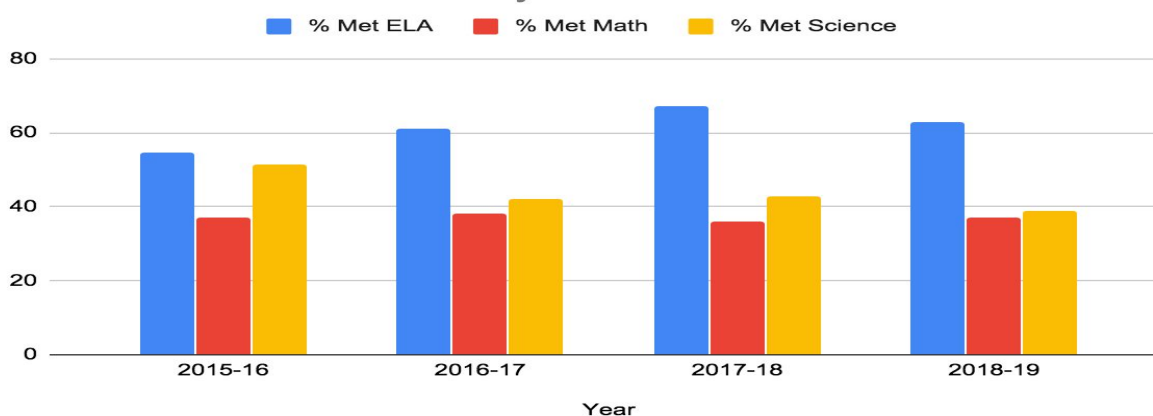


### Student Achievement Data

All WHEA students in grades 6th, 7th, 8th and 11th are required to take the Strive HI State Assessments for ELA, Math and Science. The high school students are only required to take the Biology End-of-Course (EOC) and the ACT exams in their junior year. Charter schools are exempt from all other EOCs. It should also be noted that the sample size for all grade levels is very small, often under 40 students per grade level. Small sample sizes can have a dramatic effect on the assessment data and distort the data.

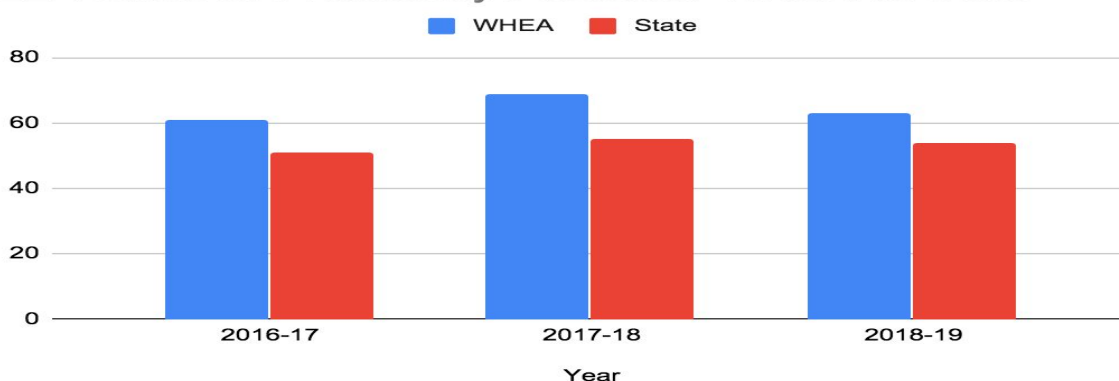
Strive HI Proficiency Percents: Below are the school's percentages of students who met for the Strive HI proficiency for ELA, math and science for the past 4 years.

**WHEA's Strive HI Proficiency Percents: 2015-2019**



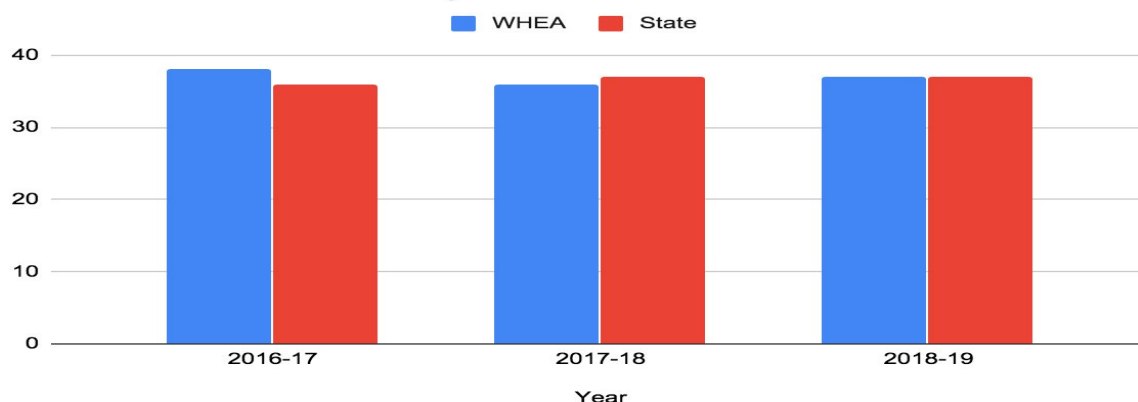
Strive HI ELA Proficiency Comparisons between WHEA and the State: WHEA students have outperformed the State for the past 3 years in the Strive HI's ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment. This is largely due to the fact that the school's curriculum is writing intensive and focuses on process writing and the Common Core Standards.

**ELA Strive HI Proficiency Percents: WHEA vs State**



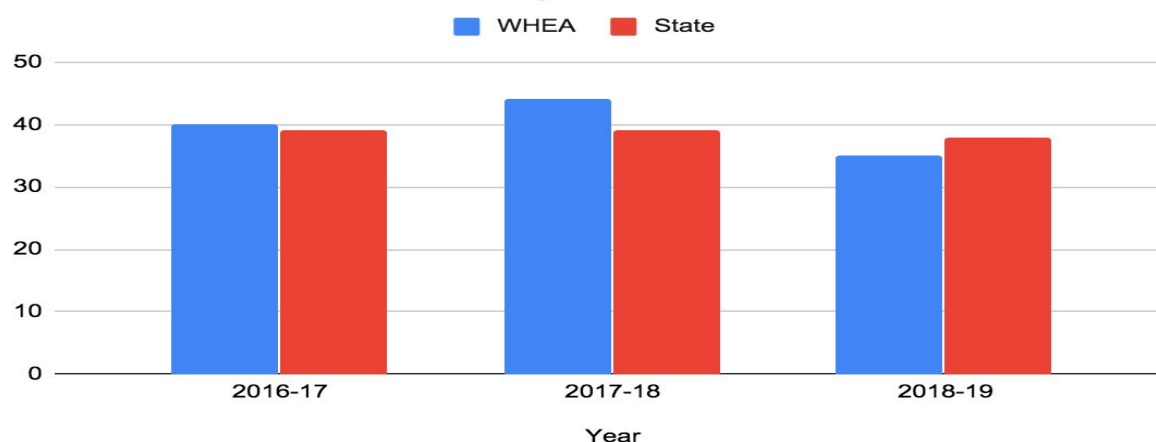
Strive HI Math Proficiency Comparisons between WHEA and the State: WHEA has always demonstrated similar proficiency scores as those of the State. Math tends to be taught more traditionally and as stand alone classes in order to meet the CCS and graduation requirements. Math standards are also addressed in projects but not all standards can be addressed through projects.

**Math Strive HI Proficiency Percents: WHEA vs State**



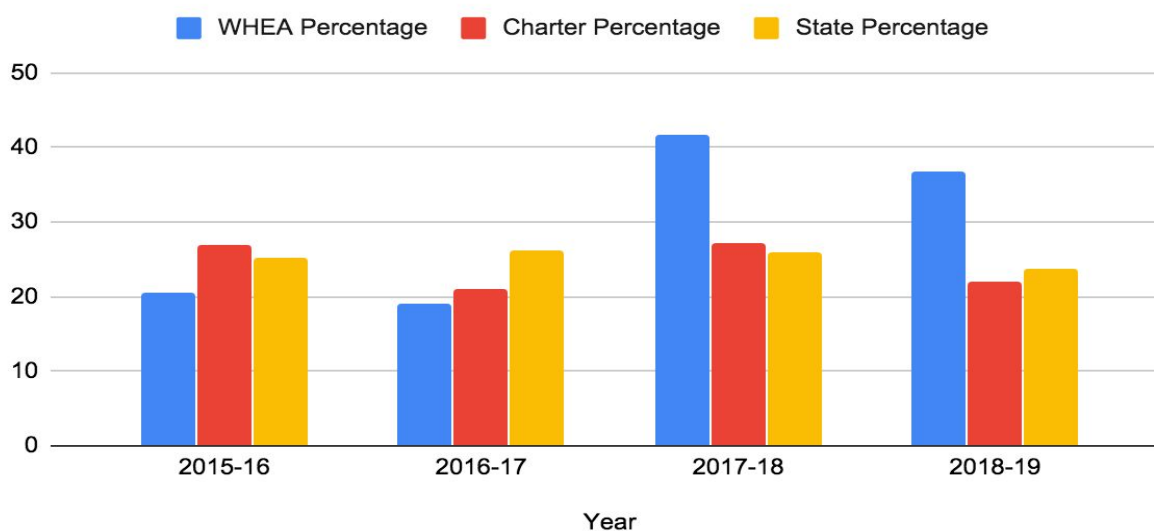
Strive HI Science Proficiency Comparisons between WHEA and the State: WHEA's Science Proficiency percents are a combination of the schools 8th grade HSA Science assessment proficiency percents and the 11th grade Biology EOC assessment proficiency percents. In the 8th grade science is taught through integrative grade level and vertical science projects. However, Biology is a stand alone class in the high school primarily due to the need to address the specific Biology standards. For the past three years the school and State have performed similarly.

**Science Strive HI Proficiency Percents: WHEA and State**

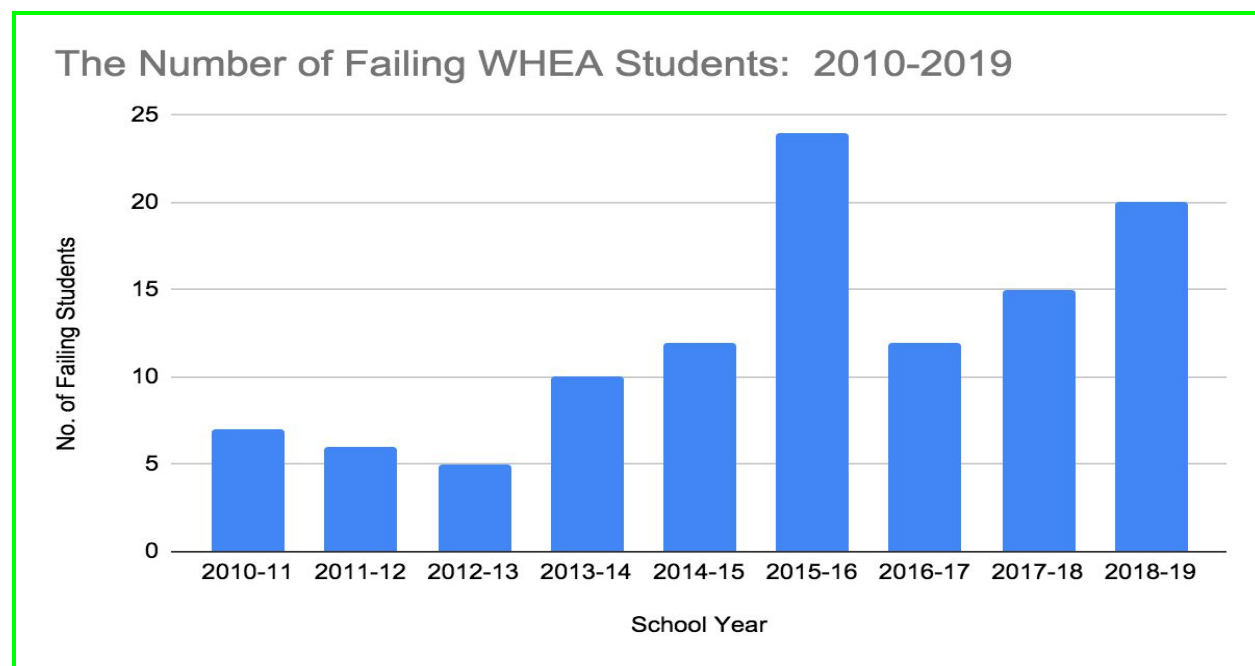


ACT Proficiency Percents Comparisons between WHEA and the State: For the past two years WHEA's juniors have outperformed the State on the ACT assessment. The high school has been raising the bar with the PBL curriculum which might explain the increase. Last year the school contracted a college counselor who also assisted the juniors in gaining ACT test skills and strategies.

### WHEA's ACT Proficiency Percentages Compared to the State & Charters

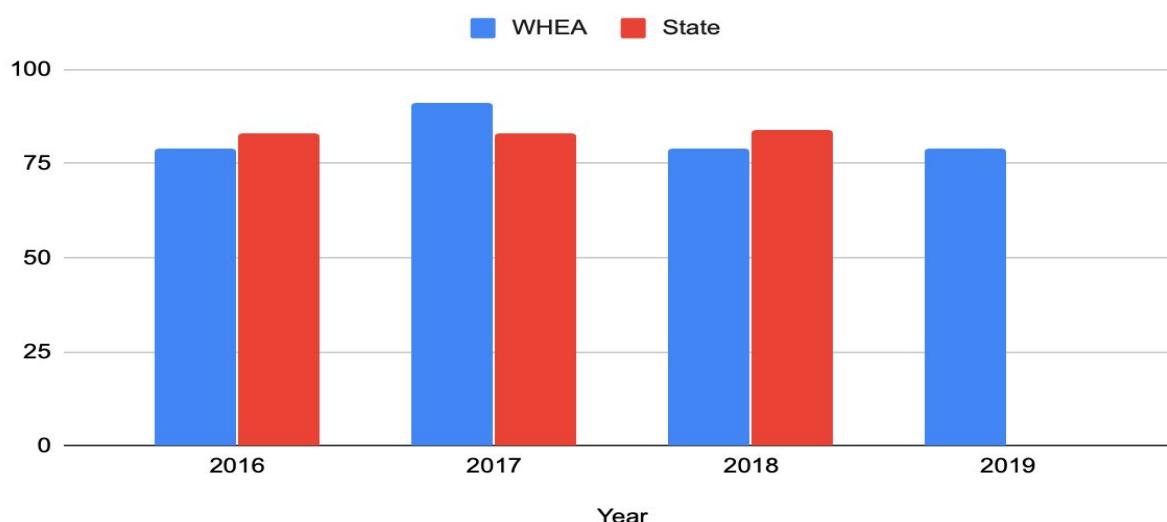


Failing Students: WHEA has been monitoring the number of students who failed a grade level for several years. It should be noted that all the failing students until last school year were high school students. Student achievement is important to the school. Therefore, monitoring the number of failing students is important and can indicate problems with the curriculum. The largest number of failing students (24) was in the school year 2015-16 which was also the largest enrollment (282) the school has had. This was a 25 student increase from the previous year with 257 students. The staff felt this was an indication that the school increased enrollment without adding in enough support to accommodate student success. This primarily affected the high school program where the increase took place. Since 2015 the staff reviews the curriculum and determines revisions based on student survey feedback and the number of failing students.



Graduation Rates: The table below compares the graduation rates for WHEA and the State over the last 4 years. Depending on the year, WHEA has either underperformed or overperformed the State. Generally the school's graduation class size is under 30 students and one or two students who don't graduate can make a dramatic difference.

### Graduation Rates for WHEA and State: 2016-2019





Fifth Year Seniors: Last year was the first time WHEA had any Fifth Year Seniors enrolled. The count was two and neither student completed graduation requirements. This year, 2019-20, the school also has two students. One student has already completed the requirements. It is not known at this time if the other student will graduate.

Running Start: Although WHEA doesn't offer Honors and AP classes it does encourage upper-classmen to take Running Start classes at West Hawaii Community College. Students must be approved by the staff in order to enroll and pass the Acuplacer. For the past 3 years WHEA has enrolled more students in the Running Start program than the State. Overall, the feedback the school receives from Palamanui Community College is favorable and the WHEA students have been successful. See data below.

- 2015-16 - 22 students attended
- 2016-17 - 15 students attended
- 2017-18 - 10 students attended
- 2018-19 - 14 students attended
- 2019-20 - 14 students are attending Fall semester, this number will likely increase for the Spring semester

According to the College & Career Readiness Indicators WHEA has had a great percent of students taking dual credit courses than Statewide:

Table: Dual Credit Percentages

<b>Year</b>	<b>WHEA</b>	<b>Statewide</b>
2016	41%	14%
2017	53%	17%
2018	22%	18%

WHEA students have been successful in the Running Start and Dual Credit program which is evidence of the strength of the school's PBL curriculum.

College Enrollment: The percentage of WHEA students who attend college is listed below. Unfortunately this does not take into account students who enter the military or attend a

trade school. The majority of last year's seniors who started college stayed in Hawaii to attend UH Manoa, UH Hilo or Hawai'i community colleges. Some did leave and received substantial scholarships for universities and colleges such as Stetson (Florida), Colorado College, Evergreen, Whittier and the College for Creative Studies in Michigan.

Year	WHEA Percentage	State Percentage
2016	48	55
2017	56	55
2018	35	55
2019	64	NA

### Staff Demographics

WHEA is designed as a teacher-led school, with an instructional staff includes one director, 20 full-time teachers including one SPED position split between the middle and high school, a half-time registrar and half-time Student Services Coordinator (SSC). There is also a half-time high school teacher, a SPED educational assistant (EA), a math part time tutor (PTT) and a Student Behavior Specialist. Support staff include an office coordinator, clerk, a custodial manager, a full-time custodian, a room cleaner and a part-time aquarist. The school also contracts a bookkeeper, a computer tech and a college counselor.

The WHEA staff has continued to grow and change since it received its charter in 2000. At the middle school level, there are currently 9 teachers that includes two grade level teachers for 6th through 8th, two math teachers and a half-time SPED teacher. Of these there are a lead middle school teacher, half-time SSC and a bridging teacher that works in the high school teaching Yearbook and advises projects. At the high school level, there are 11 full-time teachers including a half-time SPED teacher, a lead teacher, and a part-time registrar. There is also a half-time Biology and health teacher. In addition to administrative duties, the director advises a limited number of projects and manages the school's Aloha Kai tour program. The middle and High school share a SPED EA, math PTT and part-time aquarist.

Students received additional support for their Social Emotional Learning from the school's new Student Behavior Specialist. This position was created after the staff identified the need for a counselor and more support with the discipline challenges they were facing. WHEA also receives SBBH services from a part-time counselor provided by the district.

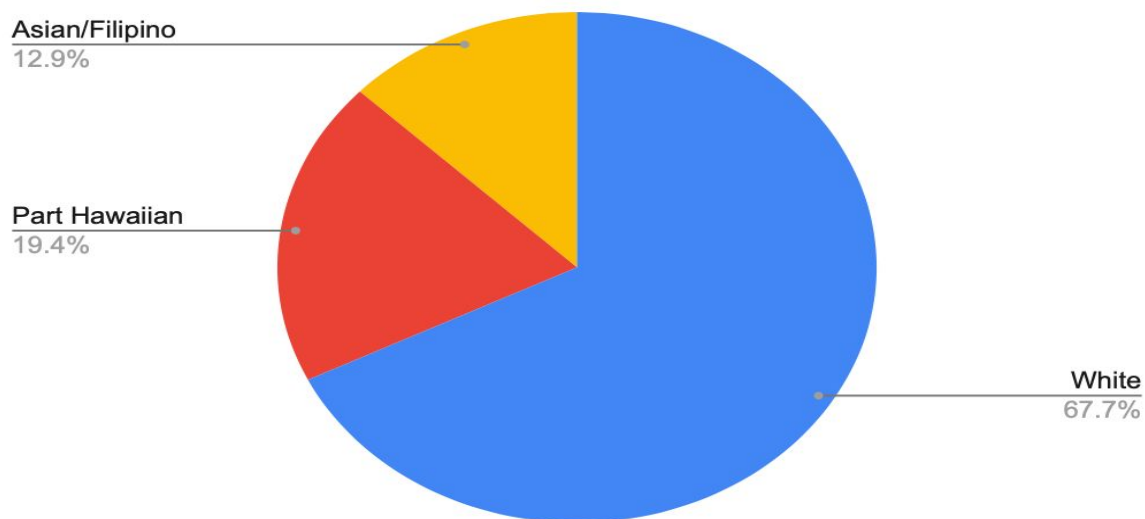
WHEA currently has two of their former graduates employed as teachers in the high school. Other graduates are the custodian and the part-time aquarist. Hiring former graduates allows these employees to bring the experience of being a "WHEA student" to their current

positions. They often provide great insight and can speak from experience. All this helps to improve the school and its PBL curriculum.

The current student to teacher ratio is about 14:1 depending on the project or class. The majority of the teachers are Highly Qualified in at least one core subject area. Many of the staff have HQ status in multi teaching areas. One staff member, has a doctorate and another is working to achieve National Board Certification. The majority of the staff live in Kailua-Kona but three live in Waikaloa and one travels from Ocean View.

Staff Ethnicity: WHEA's staff ethnicity is similar to that of the students. The majority are White or Caucasian. The second largest group for both is the part Hawaiians staff members.

### WHEA Staff Ethnicity for SY 2019-20



[WHEA Staff Roster](#)

## **II: Significant Developments and Changes**

- Include a description of any significant changes and/or developments, i.e., program additions since the last full visit, changes in student enrollment, staffing changes.
- Describe the impact these changes and/or developments have had on the school and/or specific curricular programs.

### **School Year 2016-17**

#### **ENROLLMENT: 264 Students**

Changes to Administration: This was the first year of the new administration. The WHEA Governing Board decided to change from a two Co-Director administration to a sole Director. The board also selected two lead teachers to oversee the middle and high school. One of the previous co-directors was hired while the other co-director resigned and transferred to another school.

Impact: This was a confusing and difficult year for the entire school. It was not clear as to why the governing board made the change. The director was also a teacher and still held teaching responsibilities as well as the single administration for the school. The middle and high school lead teachers were also expected to support the director in the area of student discipline as well as oversee the curriculum and their own teaching responsibilities.

Changes to Middle School Lead Teacher: There were challenges with the new middle school lead teacher who was also the new 6th grade science teacher. This was a very large load to undertake and it became apparent that there needed to be a change.

Impact: After 1st semester the change was made to split the responsibilities of the lead middle school teacher. A new lead teacher of the curriculum was appointed who was currently the 7th grade science teacher. The current lead teacher was to give support to the director regarding student discipline. This made a positive impact on the Middle School Team as the concern was recognized early on and made the change so that the team would feel better supported.

Changes to Staff: WHEA hired three full-time high school science/math teachers, a new high school social studies/sped teacher, a new 8th grade LA/SS teacher, 6th grade LA/SS, a new Middle School math teacher and a new Sped Educational Assistant. There was a new 6th grade science teacher who transferred from the high school. This teacher was also appointed the lead teacher.

Impact: This was a year of change for the middle school. The majority of the staff was new and not many were familiar with project based learning and content integration. Despite this, the new middle school teachers were dedicated and willing to learn and implement the PBL curriculum. The middle school math program improved and for the first time since the start of the middle school there was one math teacher to teach all grade levels. The new high school history/Sped teacher was an experienced teacher who also was trained in project based learning. She was able to develop a hands-on, project-based approach in history classes. She also had experience as a sped teacher and was able to give the proper support to these students. The new high school science teachers were hard working and dedicated.

However there were concerns as to whether they were bought in to the school's PBL curriculum. Overall the majority of the new teachers hired were exceptional and improvements to the curriculum as well as school culture were evident.

Leadership Training: The director began taking Skill Path trainings which are a variety of business trainings for managers. The workshops focused on leadership, teamwork, communication and compliance. She recognized that she needed to improve her leadership skills and the management of the school.

Impact: The director had a better understanding of the skills needed to work as a school administrator. She learned techniques in dealing with a variety of personalities and positive communication skills. She also began to implement a team approach to administration. Although there was further need for improvement, she started to receive positive feedback from the staff.

Professional Development: The focus of professional development was on improving communication skills. A communications coach, Hilary Moses, was hired from Huaka'i to provide workshops in communications with staff, parents and students.

Impact: There were some improvements in school communications but there was still a need to improve the overall school culture and climate.

### **School Year 2017-18**

#### **ENROLLMENT: 266 Students**

Changes to the Hiring Process: Due to previous hires it was evident the hiring process needed to be improved. WHEA always had numerous teacher applicants but it was difficult at times to find the "best fit" for the school's hands-on, project-based approach.

The Teacher Job Interview questions were revised to reflect the school's vision, mission and importance of teaming. Perspective teachers were required to provide a video of a lesson or come and teach a lesson to a group of students. A hiring committee was also established. Often the lead teachers would help with the interviews.

Impact: The school started to hire teachers that were team players with personal teaching philosophies aligned with WHEA's vision and mission. This was a positive change.

New Teacher Mentor Program: The school started a Mentor Teacher program for the new staff. This program pairs an experienced WHEA teacher with a new teacher to go over weekly grading and project expectations as well as being a support person. WHEA is a very different teaching environment for many new teachers and can be quite challenging and overwhelming. It was evidence that they needed more support in order to be successful.

Impact: This had a positive impact on the new staff as they felt they had someone they could go to and ask questions and be provided guidance in their first year as a WHEA teacher. The other positive impact has been the better teacher retention since implementing the program.

Staff Professional Development: It was clear from staff feedback that there was a need for improvements in communication. WHEA provided Active Listening training and a mental health certification class in order to better equip the teachers in this ever changing environment. There was also a Design Thinking Workshop that the entire staff attended to help improve communications among the staff.

Impact: The professional development provided the whole staff with a deeper understanding of active listening and positive communication techniques. The staff implemented the design thinking process and improvements were seen in the overall student projects which included more community involvement and global purpose.

#### Changes to Staff:

##### Middle School

- A new 6th grade LA/Social Studies teacher was hired. She was an experienced elementary school teacher from a nearby school. This was the 2nd year in a row there was a staffing change to the 6th grade team. At the end of the first semester the 6th grade science teacher and middle school math support teacher switched places.
- There was also a change in the 8th grade science teacher. The 8th grade science teacher retired the previous year that lead to the 6th grade LA/SS teacher from the previous year becoming the new 8th grade science teacher.
- A new middle school SPED teacher was hired and began taking on the responsibilities of the school's SSC (Student Services Coordinator) who would be retiring at the end of the year.

Impact: The majority of the new staff and staffing changes were very positive and the overall middle school curriculum began to improve. Unfortunately, there was still a lack of consistency in the 6th grade due to all the staffing changes which at times was frustrating for all.

High School: Two new math and science teachers were hired in the high school to replace the two that had left. One was a former WHEA graduate and the other was a new hire with a background in Biology Research.

Impact: This was a very positive change for the high school. The former WHEA graduate helped revive the robotics program. The second teacher revamped the biology class to incorporate a hands-on approach and the implementation of real world biology labs such as electrophoresis. This year the WHEA students scored higher than the State on the Biology End Of Course exam.

Safety Committee Established: Due to the climate of the nation, safety became a priority for WHEA. The WHEA Safety Committee was created. Composed of Middle School, High School and Support staff, the committee was established based on feedback from the staff. There was a need to develop and implement well defined safety policies and procedures both on and off campus including the transportation of students. There was also a focus on Student Tool Safety, Active Shooter and Shelter In Place procedures and another gate was added to the lower campus to create an exit from the lower campus. The committee met quarterly or when safety concerns were brought to their attention. These would include after school student supervision, pick up and drop off procedures for students, van safety, evacuation and fire drills.

The school was also required to follow the DOT's requirements for school vans and van drivers. This meant all staff needed to attend a van safety training course. A private van safety trainer was hired. According to new state policies all school vans needed to be painted yellow. This took additional funding and several years to implement.

Impact: Although the school had some safety policies and procedures, the implementation of the Safety Committee really helped to define and establish the school's safety policies and procedures. The school had not addressed Active Shooters or Shelter In Place prior to this year. The DOT van safety requirements were also a gray area with many charters because not all recognized that a van was considered a "school bus." WHEA made the decision to follow all DOT requirements as a result additional funding was needed to pay for the trainer and the painting of vans. The implementation of the new safety policies and procedures took time but it was well worth it. Providing a safe campus for all was critical to the success of the students and the school's PBL curriculum.

Leadership: The leadership team consisted of the director and both lead teachers. They met each semester to review staff concerns and focus on curriculum - primarily bridging the middle and high school.

Impact: Unfortunately there needed to be a change in the middle school leadership since the current situation wasn't working out. There was also a lack of team cohesion and direction largely due to the director who was still trying to juggle her teaching role and administrative responsibilities. Another problem was the lack of team meetings. The intent was to meet monthly but that changed to meeting each semester.

Curricular Changes: The biggest curricular changes were the following:

- The 8th Grade Curriculum - The new 8th grade team created an integrated, project based curriculum that focused on the history of the New England Settlement and early America. This was the dominant theme of the year and the two culminating activities were to have students publish a book with their stories based and a trip to the New

England states at the end of the school year.

- Impact: This was the first time that any WHEA teachers had made such a big curricular change that included publishing a book and going on a mainland trip with a large group of students. Not only did it take time to develop the curriculum, it also took hours of fundraising and planning. This was the first WHEA class to publish a book entitled The Growth of America. Teachers, students and parents said it was an amazing, culminating activity to end the year.
- High School Europe Trip - The new high school history teacher offered an international travel experience to Ireland, Wales and London. She made her travel arrangements with Educational First Tours (EF Tours) and 13 students went.
- Impact: This was another first for WHEA. Prior to this year, no one had ever discussed taking students to Europe. It was common knowledge that other high schools did this but no one thought a small school like WHEA would have enough interest to make it feasible. In May, 13 students and 2 chaperones went to Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. The students were given the opportunity to experience other cultures through first hand experiences.

Everyone who attended had a great experience and a new tradition has begun.

Food Service: There was a need to provide healthier food for student lunches. The director had been looking into a partnership with the Kona Pacific Charter School Food Hui. The school had a certified cafeteria that would provide lunches. Unfortunately the lunches were quite expensive and the overall cost to join the hui was close to \$20,000. During this time the owner of Island Thyme Gourmet contacted the school. They had a certified kitchen that prepared meals for several airlines. They would be able to provide healthy lunches for a reasonable cost.

Impact: Contracting Island Thyme Gourmet was an incredible improvement to WHEA's school lunch program. Clare Bodo, the owner, was willing to try new menu items and provide healthier lunch options for the students. The school has continued to contract them and the students love the salads and sandwiches.

Valued Added Measure (VAM) Longitudinal Data: The high school began collecting Evidence Folder and Research Paper grades as a requirement of their Value Added Measure requirement in the charter contract. The school is required to submit this data as part of their Academic Framework. The high school has been gathering this data since 2016.

Impact: The VAM high school data was the start of a longitudinal study regarding students



and their grades for their Evidence Folder and Research Papers which are key components of their integrated courses. The trend, although not strongly, indicates that by the time a new student completes their first year, that they perform just as well as a returning student. It has also indicated that some returning students (3rd and 4th years) tend to perform poorly on these assignments. This data has been helpful for the high school staff when they make revisions to the curriculum. It also indicates that there's a small population of students who seem to lose interest in the PBL curriculum by their 3rd year. The high school staff has been trying to address this trend by implementing different strategies such as Returning Student Help Sessions which are weekly sessions that offer academic support very similar to study hall. Another strategy was to provide weekly module work for students who were non being productive on projects. A final strategy is to offer a hybrid program where students attend their "stand alone" classes and take online Acellus courses to complete graduation requirements.

### **School Year 2018-19:**

#### **ENROLLMENT: 264**

Changes to Personnel: A new office clerk and full time custodian were hired.

Impact: This had a positive impact on the school. Both these employees are hard working and dedicated team players. The new custodian is a former WHEA graduate who is most helpful with student projects, he is often a van driver and field trip chaperone.

#### Changes to Staff:

- Middle School: WHEA hired a new 6th grade LA/SS teacher. This was the fifth year in a row that one member of the 6th grade team was new. At the semester the 6th grade science teacher, who had been the former middle school math teacher, left which meant hiring a full time substitute. Fortunately the sub was a former mentor and was very familiar with the PBL curriculum.
- Impact: Although there were a lot of changes to the 6th grade team, the students and staff had a successful year.
- High School: Two new science and math teachers were hired to replace two openings. At mid year another high school teacher moved to the mainland. A full time substitute was hired.
- Impact: One of the new teachers was a former WHEA graduate who was very familiar with the high school curriculum; especially in the area of Robotics. She was a great addition to the Robotics project and had been on the project as the team manager

when she attended WHEA. The other new teacher had a background in marine science which was very helpful since many of the projects were marine related. The substitute hired was a former WHEA teacher and she was also a great addition to the staff. The majority of the high school staff felt the new hires were a good match for the school.

#### New Positions:

- Bridging Teacher: The school has been working on bridging their middle and high school programs for several years. The idea of creating a bridging teaching position was brought up. This position would have teaching responsibilities in both middle and high school.
- Impact: The idea of a bridging teacher was easier said than done. The teacher was both a middle school project teacher, RTI and math teacher. She worked in the high school teaching Year Book and Health. The hope was that the position would also work with high school projects but that wasn't successful. It was apparent that communication between the bridging teacher and the high school needed to be improved. It was also logistically difficult at times. The plan was to continue the position for another year before determining its effectiveness.
- Student Behavior Specialist: Prior to this year, the majority of the staff had expressed the need for more support with school discipline and counseling. It was clear that the middle and high school lead teachers shouldn't be the one supporting the director regarding school discipline. They had too many other responsibilities and it may have conflicted with their HSTA contract. The school had also started focusing on Restorative Practices which included informal counseling and social groups. Currently this was too difficult to implement because of time constraints and job overload. The need for a consistent person to fill this role could make a positive impact on school culture and teacher morale.
- Impact: The school was able to recruit a former Special Education Teacher to accept the position. She supported the director with student discipline, ran the high school RTI program, ran anti bullying and vaping workshops, implemented restorative practices and informally counseled students. The addition of the Student Behavior Specialist was very positive one. This was something the school was missing. The students and staff were very receptive. Many were very grateful and commended the specialist. She was very helpful and supportive of the director as well. It was a win-win situation for the entire school!
- New Support Positions: WHEA hired outside contracted professionals in order to meet some of the needs addressed through the student and parent surveys. WHEA hired a MS/HS Math tutor for 12 hours a week who focused on RTI and students of concern. A PTT was hired for extra support for students with autism. WHEA also hired a College

and Scholarship counselor who focuses on helping students and parents through the college application process and ACT prep.

- Impact: Very positive! All the additional supports were helpful for student academic success especially the new math tutor! The addition of a college counselor was also much appreciated and provided a service that the school had been lacking.

Focus on Restorative Practices & Social Emotional Learning: Nationally there was a growing concern regarding a child's social emotional development and how this impacted their learning. At WHEA more and more students were failing largely due to their emotional state and trauma from their home life. The director was able to receive support from the DOE's West Hawaii district who had Restorative Practice Resource teachers that were able to give workshops regarding Restorative Practices, Trauma Informed and Social Emotional Learning.

Impact: Although not all staff were open to the idea of Restorative Practices the majority were. The feedback was positive regarding the workshops. The director felt this was a move in the positive direction to help support the students and joined the West Hawaii Restorative Practices cadre that met quarterly. The focus of discipline became restorative rather than punitive which led to fewer negative student interactions.

School Safety Improvements: The Safety Committee continued to take on new areas of safety. There were Shelter In Place procedures and drills in addition to Evacuation and Fire drills. The One Call Now to notify staff of emergencies was implemented and drills conducted. The Van Driver Training continued and this year the entire student body received Van Safety Training as well. There was also a focus on bullying, suicide and vaping prevention in both middle and high school. The Student Behavior Specialist and Kona Community Police Officer gave student sessions.

Impact: This improvement was very positive. The area of school safety was very important and there was a need to develop and implement new policies and procedures. The focus to educate the students on bullying, suicide and vaping prevention was critical. These were increasing behaviors that needed to be addressed. The school was also very grateful to get the support of the police department in helping with this initiative.

Leadership Improvements:

- Monthly Leadership Meetings: The leadership team was expanded to include the Student Services Coordinator, Student Behavior Specialist, Custodian Supervisor and Office Coordinator. This was a more comprehensive team than just the director and lead teachers. They met once a month and discussed school concerns and ways to improve the culture and climate.

- Impact: This was a huge improvement to last year's leadership team. The new members were committed to school improvement and the monthly meetings help solidify the team. The leadership was also becoming more effective in addressing the school's needs.
- WHEA Discipline Guidelines: The staff brought the current discipline policy (Chapter 19) and requested that it be revised and enforced more effectively. The leadership team developed the new guidelines and the WHEA Governing Board approved them. They were implemented in the Spring.
- Impact: This has had a positive impact on the students because they better understand the policies in place. This has positively affected the staff because they have a document to follow for daily infractions before sending the issues to the main office. The Student Behavior Specialist now has the policies to refer to when speaking to students and parents about discipline.
- Restorative Practice Training: Many of the leadership team received training in restorative practice techniques that were implemented at staff meetings such as "circle." The idea was to help improve the school climate and celebrate each other's differences both staff and students alike.
- Impact: The majority of staff now understand the value of celebrating the wellness of the whole child as opposed to creating a culture of punitive measures that do not create healthy relationships. These techniques have been implemented in All Staff meetings and specific groups of students. There is a need for more staff to receive training on 'circling keeping'.

#### Curriculum:

- High School Robotics: For the last few years the Robotics project has been losing students and staff. There was a need to recharge the project! Two new staff members took the challenge and the revitalization of the project began.
- Impact: The new energy brought by the new project advisors and the recruitment efforts for more students really paid off! The project was also able to recruit a new mentor along with those who had volunteered in previous years. This team was able to raise enough funds to compete in two First Robotics Competitions in Australia and the World Competition in Houston! They received Honorable Mention in one of their Australian Competitions. It was an amazing accomplishment!

- 8th Grade Project Proposals: In an effort to prepare the 8th graders for the WHEA high school the students were required to develop their own project proposals using the high school guidelines.
- Impact: This addition to the 8th grade curriculum has really helped prepare students who planned to attend the WHEA high school. It was a step forward in developing more bridging opportunities between the middle and high school.

WOW Pass Implementation: At a staff meeting last year there was a discussion on how to improve school culture and climate. It was suggested that students and staff be honored for acts of kindness and going above and beyond what was expected. It took a year to implement. WOW Passes are read twice a week at the All School Openings on Mondays and Fridays by the Director. Everyone has the opportunity to nominate someone and everyone can receive a WOW Pass including support staff.

Impact: This has had a very positive impact on the school. Many look forward to Monday and Friday openings to cheer on the WOW Pass recipients! It has become a part of the school's culture.

### **School Year 2019-20:**

#### **Enrollment: 278**

Personnel Changes: One of the High School teachers took a Sabbatical and another full time teacher took a part-time position. Three full time high school teachers were hired to fill the openings and also take on more of the Director's teaching responsibilities. WHEA also hired a full time EA for the Special Education Program that services both Middle and High School students. A new full time 6th grade science teacher was hired.

Impact: The addition of the new staff has been positive! Everyone has been a team player which has really helped to improve the school climate. The new 6th grade science teacher was in the same teaching cohort as the 6th grade LA/SS. They have made a great team. For the first time in years the middle school has been able to focus on revamping and scaffolding the curriculum. The new SPED EA has also been very helpful. She's a certified LA teacher and former School Based Therapist so she comes with a lot of experience.

Safety: WHEA has been the first to complete the newly approved DOT Van Safety Training for charter schools. Nineteen staff attended are now certified school bus drivers for 14 passenger buses.

Impact: This was a huge accomplishment mainly due to the diligence of the school's

custodian supervisor who helped develop the training program with the private trainer. This allows the school to meet the DOT requirement for all charter school vans that are required by law.

#### Curriculum:

- The continued focus on Social Emotional Learning and Restorative Practices led to several new additions. The staff and students have participated in several Aloha SEL workshops provided by Alan Silva who helped develop the curriculum. The school also made a commitment to join the districts SEL cadre which is different from the RP cadre the school joined last year. The focus on this cadre is to implement new Behavior RTI practices that will help students be more successful learners. The team composed of both the middle and high school RTI teachers, a high school gen. ed teacher, the SSC, Student Behavior Specialist and the director have been learning how positive classroom management techniques can help support students. The team will share what they learn with the staff.
- Impact: Although there have only been two cadre meetings the team was able to collect useful data that will help when making a new Behavior RTI plan. At this point it is hard to determine the effectiveness since it hasn't been fully implemented yet.

Leadership - Implementation of Education Change Makers: The leadership team made the commitment to make real changes that would help develop a one-team school. The team has been working with the Education Change Makers to help improve staff relationships and school climate. It is a year commitment and the changes usually take up to 3 years to fully see the benefits of the program.

Impact: Although the leadership team has only been working on this for a semester there have been some positive changes. The two functions, a surprise Teacher Appreciation Morning Coffee and Gaucamole Challenge were well attended and the feedback was very favorable.

#### **WHEA Highlights:**

- **8th Grade Published 2 books on early America & traveled to New England 2017-18 & 2018-19**

- **First Robotics Competitions in Australia and Worlds 2018**  
**2019 High School Robotics Team in Australia**



- **Science Olympiad went to state Competition 2018**
  - **4th top High School in Hawaii according to Honolulu Magazine 2019**
- **Featured Charter School for Innovation at the Charter School Leadership Summit 2019**





### III: Ongoing School Improvement

- A description of the school's process and procedures for addressing the notable strengths and significant opportunities/challenges/needs.
- A description of the implementation and the monitoring of the action plan.
- Include how annual progress reports, as well as this third-year report, have been prepared and whether they were presented to the governing board.

#### **WHEA's Improvement Process & Procedures:**

Governance: The WHEA Governing Board provides oversight of the school's management. It's overall responsibility is to "*ensure that management delivers results and the school performs according to its charter.*" They determine the school's policies and procedures, establish the required bylaws and oversee the school's finances. In other words any decision related to the school's overall performance which are outlined in WHEA's charter school contract are part of the board's responsibilities.

The school's governing board is composed of members from the community, parents, teachers, support staff and student body. The board meets monthly to address and review the finances, receive school updates, review bylaws and establish new policies when they are needed. [WHEA Governing Board Members for SY 2019-20](#)

Since the last accreditation cycle the WHEA Governing Board has made significant improvements in three crucial areas.

1. Recruiting and Retaining members. It is no easy task to attract volunteers who, according to legislation, "provide the governing board with a diversity of perspective and a level of objectivity that accurately represent the interests of the charter school students and the surrounding community." During the past three years, the WHEA GB has been successful identifying and retaining new members who bring experiences in financing, marketing and grant writing along with a strong desire to give back to the community. One significant addition to the GB is a former student, now a local business woman who has a child attending WHEA middle school. She brings a unique perspective, new leadership skills and positive energy to the board.
2. Recognizing a need to work more efficiently and effectively as a board, five members have attended board training sessions. They returned from the experiences with a plan to train the entire board. Time will be devoted at each monthly meeting to discuss one topic from Brian Carpenter's book, *Governing for Greatness*. At the end of the year, members will evaluate the board's improvement.
3. Thanks to one of the technologically facile members, the board has begun collaborating on documents in Google Docs. This is an educational and time-saving process. Each year, the GB must review board policies and update them as necessary. Each member benefits from re-considering the policies and making suggestions for improvement. This means that members attend meetings ready to discuss and amend

policies and not spend time simply reading the policies. One significant document that is now in the process of change is the By-Laws, an important foundational document.

The Leadership Team: In 2017, WHEA's Governing Board decided to restructure the school's leadership, which was primarily two Co-Directors. The change was made to a single director and two lead teachers representing middle and high school. This was the start of the Leadership Team. Over the past two years the team now consists of the director, both Middle and High School lead teachers, the Student Services Coordinator (SSC), the Student Behavior Specialist, Custodial Manager and Office Supervisor. The Leadership team has monthly meetings where they discuss the needs of the school. Whether the challenge is regarding student safety or the implementation of a schoolwide initiative, the team reviews and makes decisions that support a positive school climate and student success.

The Staff: After the Leadership Team discusses the school's needs and challenges they are brought to the entire staff. Some decisions are made by the director, some by the Leadership Team and others are decided by the staff or separate middle and high school teams. The school takes a "team approach" rather than a "top down approach" when it makes decisions. The staff has a voice on many of the major decisions made. Some decisions the entire school has focused on this year have been related to student safety after school and the afternoon pickup. Other decisions have been curricular related to Social Emotional Learning and the implementation of HA: BREATH. It should also be mentioned that both the middle and high school have representatives on the governing board as well as non certified staff. Any employee can speak to their representative and have an idea or concern brought to the board.

Middle and High School Teams: The middle and high school teams focus on curriculum and the running of the middle and high school programs. Although there is some bridging the students and staff run independently of one another due to the fact that the middle school students tend to need a more structured learning environment. This past year the high school decided to implement a change to the projects. Now students are required to provide statistical analysis of their research paper projects and present their findings at the end of the school year. The goal was to make sure the project investigations were statistically sound. In the middle school the focus has been on improving the project framework and developing project procedures and assignments/rubrics that are standardized throughout all middle school grades. The team has also begun addressing how to scaffold LA and science standards.

The Safety Committee: This committee was created last year to address the physical safety needs. They meet quarterly or when there is a safety concern. They design and review safety protocols and submit everything to the director. Once the director has approved it the staff is given a chance to review and make comments on. Last year the Safety Committee

implemented the One Call Now for staff for emergency situations that might include an unwanted visitor, a student in crisis or a dangerous weather advisory.

The Students: The students also have a voice in some of the changes and decisions that are made at WHEA. Each year the students are able to give their feedback regarding the school, staff and curriculum in the annual student survey. Last year students also completed the Tripod Survey. The results are shared with the staff and changes and/or revisions are made depending on the feedback. This year there was a separate survey given regarding the morning protocol and whether the school should meet all together with everyone each morning. The results indicated that the students wanted to meet twice a week. This also echoed the staff's results and the change was made. The high school also gives their new students and returning students separate surveys related to the high school curriculum. Leadership is another way students can have a say in the decision making process. Both the middle and high school leadership plan the school's Spirit Week at the end of October. The student representative on the Governing Board can also bring requests to the board. This year the student rep. had requested a Japanese teacher to support the school's online Japanese class. The request was approved and there is a weekly Japanese class after school.

The Parents: The WHEA parents have several avenues to give feedback and voice concerns. First they are represented on the board. There is a middle and high school parent rep. Second the school sends annual surveys that focus on the school, staff and curriculum. Unfortunately there has been very little response to the surveys which makes it hard to get a clear picture of how the school is doing. A few years ago the parent survey feedback indicated a need to focus on anti bullying. Last year the school's Student Behavior Specialist ran bullying workshops for middle school students along with the County Community Police Officer. Another way parents can make suggestions is through the school's PTO. They meet each month and often focus on ways to offer more support to the school. Finally, parents can always contact the director and meet with her to voice concerns.

### **Implementation and Monitoring of the Schoolwide Improvement Plan:**

The Schoolwide Improvement Plan is the means by which the school addresses and reviews student achievement of standards and general learner outcomes. After the last accreditation visit the staff reviewed the WASC Visiting Committee's Areas of Concern and developed a new schoolwide improvement plan based on that and other areas of focus that were needed to ensure student success. The making of the new plan was an All School team collaboration. The goals and benchmarks were established through this process. Each year the plan is reviewed at the beginning of the year and updated by the staff at a staff meeting at the end of the year. Afterwards the director inputs all the additional documentation, therefore

updating the plan. The plan is sent out annually to the governing board to keep them abreast of what the school's focus is regarding improvements and the progress made.

### **Preparation of the Mid-Cycle Progress Report:**

Oversight Team: The team coordinator of the mid-cycle progress report was Dulcy Dawson. She is a high school teacher and had been part of the last accreditation. She was responsible for the information in Chapters II and IV. Heather Nakakura, the director, also helped with the compilation of Chapters I and III. She had also helped to write the previous WASC report. Dr. Nina Buchanan, a representative on the school's governing board, agreed to review and edit the report. She is a retired Ed. Professor from UH Hilo and has been a member on numerous WASC accreditation teams.

Process: The process of compiling the school's mid-cycle progress report was primarily done by Dulcy Dawson and Heather Nakakura. The staff's primary responsibility was helping with Chapter IV which was on the improvement plan implementation and critical areas of followup. As stated previously, the staff helps to update the school's improvement plan annually. Earlier this year at an all school staff meeting, the staff worked on addressing the critical areas of follow up. The staff has also been tasked with developing helpful documents for the upcoming WASC Visiting Committee review such as student exemplars and curriculum maps.

### **Approval:**

The Mid-cycle Progress Report final draft was completed in early January 2020 and emailed to the staff, parents, and WHEA's Governing Board for feedback. The report was also sent to the WASC Visiting Committee Chair to review. Once completed, the report was sent to WASC and the Mid-Cycle Visiting Committee. It was also posted on the school's website and highlighted in the school's online January newsletter.

#### **IV: Report on Action Plan Progress/Critical Areas of Follow-up**

- Provide analytical comments on the accomplishment of each schoolwide action plan section referencing the critical areas for follow-up addressed through each section; provide supporting evidence, including how each area has impacted student learning outcomes.
- If any critical areas for follow-up were not included in the school's action plan, indicate what actions have been taken to address this issue and provide supporting evidence, including the impact on student learning outcomes.
- Comment on any major refinements to the current action plan used based on the analysis of progress.

**Note: The school's schoolwide action plan should have incorporated all the critical areas of follow-up or major recommendations that were stated in the last self-study visiting committee report.**

#### **WHEA's Schoolwide Improvement Plan & Critical Areas of Followup** **[WHEA's School Improvement Plan](#)**

The staff developed 3 major goals to focus on for the Schoolwide Improvement based on the WASC Visiting Committees critical areas of followup and other areas that the staff felt needed attention. Individual benchmarks or tasks were also defined to give specific focus to the essential details of the major goals. The plan has been updated annually and contains detailed information and analytic comments for each task. Here are the goals and tasks:

**GOAL ONE: *Improving WHEA Leadership to create a stronger foundation for school operations, curricular alignment between middle and high school and increased student achievement.***

- **Task 1: Improve school wide communication between all stakeholders (leadership, staff, students & parents) to create a strong foundation for school operations, curricular alignment between middle and high school and increased student learning.**
- **Task 2: Create and implement well defined policies and practices related to school operations, employees and students in order to improve the school and student learning.**
- **Task 3: Develop a process to determine the effectiveness of Leadership Team.**
- **TASK 4: Improve school climate by addressing school safety, bullying, cyberbullying & inappropriate use of technology.**

This goal was developed based on the feedback from the WASC Visiting Committee as well as staff. One critical area that WHEA needed to address was the following:

*Critical Area 1: "There needs to be consistent communication and planning among school staff, teachers, administration, students, parents, and stakeholders that is mindful of role delineation and well-defined expectations. Clear, well-communicated systems, procedures, and processes will create a strong foundation for school operations, curricular alignment between the middle and high school, and increased student learning."*

The staff felt that improving the school's leadership would help to create an environment of consistent communication for all stakeholders. This would also support the implementation of clearer school policies and procedures and build a stronger foundation which would support further curriculum alignment and student achievement. Four specific tasks were developed to address this goal. Tasks 1 through 3 primarily address the critical area mentioned by the last Visiting Committee. Task 4 was developed to address feedback from parents, students and staff. The school needed to develop stronger safety policies and procedures that also addressed the students' emotional well being. The evidence collected from student, parent and staff surveys suggests that the school is on the right track but still has a ways to go. Student feedback suggests that the high school needs to be careful of implementing too many curricular changes. The staff concerns primarily focused on school safety and discipline which have been improving over the past several years. WHEA students continue to do well on the State Assessments and ACT however failures have begun to increase so it's hard to determine the effects on student achievement. Some of the new policies and procedures that have been developed are:

- A Leadership Team has been created that consists of team members from all areas of the staff who meet monthly and have committed to improving the school starting with building a more cohesive One School team.
- Leadership Feedback surveys are completed by the staff annually to help improve the leadership team and give useful feedback.
- Student Behavior Specialist position was created to help address student discipline and implement restorative practices regarding student behavior. [Position Responsibilities](#)
- A new schoolwide Discipline Plan which has brought a consistency in communication amongst the school's stakeholders. This policy was approved by the WHEA Governing Board and has been posted around the school, and is also in the Student/Parent Handbook and WHEA Employee Handbook. [WHEA Discipline Guidelines](#)
- WHEA has created a Safety Committee that has provided the stakeholders with clear procedures for fire, disaster and all other safety drills.
- WHEA has implemented a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum across campus by encouraging students and staff to use weekly WOW passes to highlight a positive culture school-wide.
- The office sends weekly WHEA email announcements to stakeholders.
- The Middle School is currently using High School rubrics and procedures for

some of their projects.

- Middle School and High School are sharing some of the projects in order to bridge the two levels in expectations and procedures such as Marine Ecosystems and Malama Aina.
- A bridging teacher position was created to help bridge the middle and high schools and share teaching responsibilities. This position currently teaches middle school math, middle school RTI and high school Yearbook and Malama Aina projects. [Bridging Teacher Responsibilities](#)
- High School and Middle School History Departments work together to provide information and curriculum ideas.
- The One Call Now communication system includes emergency staff notifications regarding Campus Lockdowns and Shelter-In-Place.

**GOAL TWO: *Enhance school-wide data collection to guide instruction and student achievement, ultimately providing information for data driven curricular changes.***

- **Task 1: Develop, align and modify middle and high school CCS rubrics after reviewing student related data.**
- **Task 2: Develop consistency in data collection and impact analysis especially in the area of authentic data specific to WHEA's curriculum.**
- **Task 3: Systematically implement an RTI process to address the needs of all students, especially the struggling learner.**

Goal two was designed to further address the development of the school's curricular framework based on the Common Core and Next Generation Science standards as well as incorporate skill development through the PBL. This goal incorporates the following critical area of followup:

*Critical Area 2: "WHEA leadership and faculty need to continue the development of its comprehensive curricular framework for all grade levels and content areas based on the Standards and Benchmarks. All student projects and activities required of WHEA students need to be included so that a framework of skill development as well as increased content complexity is defined."*

The staff agreed with the importance of this as an area of followup and designed three tasks to give further focus on what specific areas needed improvement. Task 1 also addresses some of the critical area of followup mentioned under Goal 1 related to curriculum alignment. This goal further supports the alignment of the school's project based integrative curriculum which focus is on CCS rubrics and checklists. The school also felt that there needed to be more consistency in gathering and analyzing authentic data in order to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum and where students needed more support. Task 3 further addresses this and the need to improve the school's RTI program.

The evidence that demonstrates the development of a comprehensive standards based curricular framework are:

- All WHEA Teachers are expected to complete yearly curriculum maps with standards and benchmarks for all content areas addressed in projects.
  - [Sample HS Research Paper Curriculum Map](#)
  - [8th Grade Science Curriculum Map](#)
- In the Middle School and High School project expectations have been scaffolded to provide more support to students' understanding. The middle school has been meeting throughout the school year to refine and scaffold the LA and science curricula based on standards. The lead high school teacher has met with the 8th grade teachers & previous 8th graders to develop the high school PBL curriculum that will allow a smoother transition from middle to high school. [Middle School Framework Notes 2017-current](#)
- The high school has revised and updated all their project related assignments based on CCS and NGGS including a new Engineering Design Project proposal and Research Paper Grading Checklist. [Engineering Design Project Proposal rubric](#)
- The development of a WHEA Standards Database has started. [High School Mathematics CCS Database](#)
- Over the past few years the following curricular pieces have been revised and/or developed to align the curriculum
  - The TMS Planner - Although both middle and high schools use different planners they both use 12 points per hour.
  - The middle and high schools use a data log book to document project research. The middle school uses the I-5 and the high school used the DLB.
    - [High School DLB rubric](#)
    - [Middle School I-5 Project Rubric](#)
  - Both the middle and high school use the project proposal process. Last year the 8th graders implemented the high school proposal rubric and have continued to use it. [High School Project Proposal Rubric](#)
  - Khan Academy for math is used by the majority of the math teachers, both middle and high school, as a part of their curriculum.
  - A standardized Oral Presentation rubric is used by all grade levels in middle school. [Middle School Oral Presentation Rubric](#)
  - Both use a standards based summary rubric when summarizing research articles.
    - [High School A.C.E. Rubric](#)
    - [Middle School R.A.C.E. Scoring Rubric](#)
  - Both middle and high school teachers have started using Google Classroom as their electronic grading system.



Goal Two also addresses the Visiting Committee's last critical area of followup:

*Critical Area 3: "WHEA needs to consistently use authentic and individual student assessment results to inform needed curricular and instructional adjustments. Intentional and consistent assessment including student work and survey data need to be included and analyzed at monthly staff meetings."*

Tasks two and three of this goal specifically focus on the use of authentic and student assessments to inform curricular decisions. This also includes student work and survey data. Here is the evidence that shows progress in these areas:

- The high school has been viewing longitudinal data on student research paper and evidence folder scores since 2016. This data is reviewed by the high school team annually to help make curricular decisions. It is also part of the school's Academic Framework Value Added Measure (VAM) requirement with the Charter School Commission. [High School Longitudinal Data](#)
- Renaissance Star is used for the LA screener for the entire school. The scores are reviewed and determination is made by the teachers regarding who needs to participate in RTI. [Star LA Data 2019](#)
- The middle school has started gathering data on Vertical Project grades to determine if there is a need for revisions. [Middle School Vertical Project Data](#)
- Both middle and high schools have RTI programs to give academic support to students in need. They are also planning on implementing RTI-B (Behavior) for students who need more emotional and social support in order to make academic gains.
- The school's Student Services Coordinator has been gathering data on student Time on Task behavior to determine which students may need more support. This data is often brought to IEP and 504 meetings to determine services. [Intervention Data](#)
- Both Parent and Student surveys are given annually. The results are reviewed by the entire staff. Changes are made based on feedback. Last year the students participated in the Tripod Survey and parents took the School Quality Survey. Results are on file. Some of the changes that have been implemented from student and parent feedback are:
  - Antibullying, suicide and vaping workshop for students.
  - Hiring a College Counselor to give highschool students and parents more support with financial, college selections, scholarships and ACT prep.
  - Improving school safety.
  - Changes to the implementation of morning protocol which is now done twice a week instead of daily.
- 2019 WHEA School Climate Survey. The results indicated the need for a stronger leadership team and were unsatisfactory. Only  $\frac{2}{3}$ 's of the staff completed the survey so it's difficult to get comprehensive feedback.

After reviewing the evidence there have been improvements to the development of a

comprehensive framework however more authentic data needs to be collected and analyzed regarding how these curricular changes have impacted student achievement. This will require more time for the staff to meet and determine what type of data should be collected. WHEA also needs to develop a comprehensive standards database that teachers can have access to in order to determine what standards and benchmarks are being done and through what grades and/or projects. This process has started but needs to be completed.

**Goal Three: *Bridging WHEA's High School and Middle School in order to achieve a more comprehensive PBL program that will increase student achievement and promote a positive school climate.***

- **Task 1: Provide more collaboration opportunities for lead teachers and administration to research, become familiar with both campuses and brainstorming ways to build bridging between campuses.**
- **Task 2: Develop and implement common curricular practices & processes schoolwide.**
- **Task 3: Develop a common PBL framework for all grade levels based on standards (CCS & NGGS) that embody WHEA's vision and mission.**
- **Task 4: Improve teacher recruitment & retention by informing applicants of WHEA's integrative PBL curriculum and school culture.**

Tasks 1 through 3 for this goal are partly in response to the Visiting Committee's Critical Areas 1 and 2. The school recognizes the need to improve in the areas of bridging the middle and high school which include the development of a comprehensive framework that scaffolds not only standards but desired skills and supports all students, not just self directed learners. The school believes that in order to become "one school" it will need to start with the leadership team. Presently this has become a major focus and the team is receiving support from the Education Change Makers to help improve the climate and culture amongst the entire staff. Task 4 was created by the staff which relates to teacher recruitment and retention. The school has been implementing new hiring strategies and giving new teachers more support in hopes of retaining a true WHEA team player.

Some of the evidence that supports this goal has been previously mentioned above. There tends to be some overlap in the tasks therefore the evidence is the same. Other evidence that supports this goal are:

- Documented collaboration opportunities include:
  - Monthly Leadership Team Meetings [Sample Leadership Agenda/Notes](#)
  - Leadership and school improvement training and coaching from Education Change Makers.
  - Workshops and professional development on Social Emotional Learning and Restorative Practices which are now being implemented.
  - New hiring practices that include a revised set of interview questions, checking references, requiring potential hires to teach a lesson or send a video tape of a lesson and reviewing the WHEA Employee Handbook.

- Mentor Teacher Program that offers more support for new teachers.

After reviewing the evidence that supports this goal and Critical Areas of Followup it is clear that progress has been made in supporting student achievement and improving the school climate. WHEA continues to have a well performing school and was ranked the 4th top public high school in 2019 by Honolulu Magazine. This was based on the school's Strive HI scores. It is also considered one of the most innovative charter schools and was recognized for this at the 2019 Charter School Leadership summit. The enrollment has been steadily increasing over the past few years as well as the number of students on the waiting lists. Having stated this, survey feedback also suggests that the school needs to continue to focus on improving the school culture and climate which should positively affect student achievement.

### **Major Areas of Refinement to WHEA's Schoolwide Improvement Plan**

After reviewing and updating the school's Improvement Plan, there are some areas that need more focus and other areas that have duplicated tasks and should be revised. The school should continue to work on:

- Creating a positive learning environment for students by continuing to develop a strong leadership team that promotes positive, clear communications and provides time for continued collaboration among middle and high school teachers.
- Developing a well defined curricular framework that scaffolds standard-based content and skills in order to improve student achievement.
- Developing and analyzing authentic student data that guides curricular changes that support project based learning and the school's vision and mission.
- Creating an environment that gives further support to failing students which would include academic and emotional interventions.

## APPENDIX (Links)

[WHEA Staff Check In Survey 2019](#)

[Parent Survey 2019](#)

[Student Survey 2019](#)

[WHEA Employee Handbook 2019-20](#)

[WHEA Parent Handbook 2019-20](#)