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APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE OF SUBMITTAL: April 4, 2025

DATE OF MEETING: April 10, 2025

TO: Cathy K. Ikeda, Chairperson
State Public Charter School Commission

FROM: Darlene Flores, Applications Specialist
State Public Charter School Commission

AGENDA ITEM: VII. Action on the Pre-K Only Charter School Application: Waikiki Community
Preschool

I. DESCRIPTION

Action on Charter School Application for Proposed Pre-K Only Charter School, Waikiki Community Preschool.

II. AUTHORITY

Charter School Applications: Pursuant to §302D-5(a), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), “[a]uthorizers are responsible for executing the following essential powers and duties: . . . (1) Soliciting and evaluating charter applications; (2) Approving quality charter applications that meet identified educational needs and promote a diversity of educational choices; [and] (3) Declining to approve weak or inadequate charter applications[.]”

HRS §302D-39 Public early learning and preschool programs; administrative authority. (a) The commission shall have administrative authority over all state-funded early learning programs and private partnership-funded preschool programs in public charter schools except for special education and Title I-funded prekindergarten programs. ... (c) Subject to the availability of funding, the commission shall implement an application process for schools to establish an early learning program.

III. BACKGROUND

For the 2024 pre-k only charter school application cycle, the application was assessed by an evaluation team consisting of Dr. Ed H. Noh, Danny Vasconcellos, Jr., Caitlin Kryss, Miya Nishio, Dr. Ann Abeshima, Dr. Caroline Soga, and Dr. Patricia Gooch. The evaluation team assessed the school's purpose, academic, financial, and governance plans submitted in the application.

The evaluation team's role in the applications process was to evaluate the application against the evaluation criteria and develop recommendations for approval or denial to the State Public Charter School Commission (Commission). In order to generate its recommendation, the evaluation team assessed the submitted application and conducted an interview with applicant group members. The evaluation team does not consider the public hearing testimony in developing its recommendation or any comments that have been submitted by the Department of Education (DOE) in developing its recommendation.

Key components of the evaluation process are as follows:

- **Application Review:** Evaluators assess the applicant's responses to the application questions, submitted attachments, and overall proposal, focusing on school purpose, academic, facility/financial, and governance plan
- **Capacity Interview:** As required by Section 302D-13, HRS, the evaluation team conducted a capacity interview with Waikiki Community Preschool on February 25, 2025. The applicant group members that attended the interview were: Caroline Hayashi, Paddy Kauhane, Kristen Hara, Lisa Lee, Nancy Wallace, Pamela Seelig, and Charlene Moore
- **Public Hearing:** Section 302D-13, HRS requires the Commission to hold a public hearing to allow the public an opportunity to provide its input on each charter application. As such, the Commission held a public hearing on the application on February 27, 2025. The public hearing was held at the Commission office and via Zoom to enable the public to testify and receive a presentation from the applicant about their proposed charter school. Written testimony¹ provided by four individuals was provided at this meeting.
- **Evaluation Team Recommendation Report:** This report was produced by the Evaluation Team summarizing their review of the application and clarification interview. There are four components of the recommendation report, each corresponding to the main sections of the Pre-K only charter application: school purpose, academic plan, facility/financial plan, and governance plan. Each section includes a rating, a summary of the submitted plan and analysis of evidence supporting Waikiki Community Preschool's capacity to execute their plan. This report was transmitted to the applicant on April 4, 2025, and attached as part of the submittal for the Applications Committee meeting on April 10, 2025.

¹ Public hearing video recording of the February 27, 2025 meeting:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iG0oZnIC9QjWCioB9HEmlyDi6hWZi-Yd/view?usp=drive_link

Link to the written testimony of the February 27, 2025 meeting:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12mI3Dv84tPgGr6cehHv9kfHa-4X-WO9X/view>

- **EOEL Comments Solicited:** Commission staff solicited comments from the Executive Office on Early Learning (EOEL). The Commission received comments from EOEL Director, Yuuko Arikawa-Cross. The feedback has been attached as **Exhibit 1** for your review.

IV. INFORMATION FOR CONSIDERATION

Summary of Section Ratings

Opening a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan. It is not an endeavor for which strength in one area can compensate for material weakness in another. Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must demonstrate evidence of capacity to implement the proposed plan, meet the criteria for all main sections of the application school purpose, academic plan, facility/financial plan, and governance plan and present an overall proposal that is likely to result in the successful opening of a *high-quality charter school*, as defined in the Application.

Evaluation Team Recommendation Report

In creating its Recommendation Report for Waikiki Community Preschool, the following was assessed:

- Waikiki Community Preschool's application was assessed against the evaluation criteria presented in the Pre-K-only Charter School Application; and
- Capacity interview

In their report, the evaluation team recommends that the Commission **approve** Waikiki Community Preschool's application, as they met the standard of approval in all applicable areas of the application. The Evaluation Team Recommendation Report is attached in **Exhibit 2** of this submittal.

V. SCOPE OF COMMISSIONER REVIEW

To make a recommendation to the full Commission regarding the approval or denial the application, the Application states that the Applications Committee will consider the following:

- Application Sheet
- Application materials
- Capacity Interview
- Evaluation Team Recommendation Report
- Public hearing testimony
- Executive Office on Early Learning comments

Applicants were advised at the beginning of the application process that the Application should be a complete and accurate depiction of their proposed plans, and that **no new information will be accepted**. For the purposes of the application process, **new information means any information that substantially differs from what is provided in the application and is revisionary in nature. Applicants shall not provide any new information beyond the information provided to the Evaluation Team in the Application, and interviews because such new information would not have been completely evaluated by the Evaluation Team.**

Further, the Request for Proposals states that **the Commission shall not consider new information** that was not available to the Evaluation Team. As such, when conducting a review of the application, and during decision-making, Commissioners should not consider any new information submitted by the applicant.

VI. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION MAKING STATEMENT:

The Application Committee should consider the recommendation by the evaluation team and deliberate whether to recommend approval or denial of the pre-k only charter application for Waikiki Community Preschool to the full Commission.

Exhibit 1

**Executive Office on Early Learning Comments
Waikiki Community Preschool**

Mission Statement:

To inspire young learners to reach their fullest potential through community-focused learning, that celebrates diversity, encourages creativity, and builds strong foundations for future success. We empower children to thrive in a nurturing environment where they are supported by and contribute to their community.

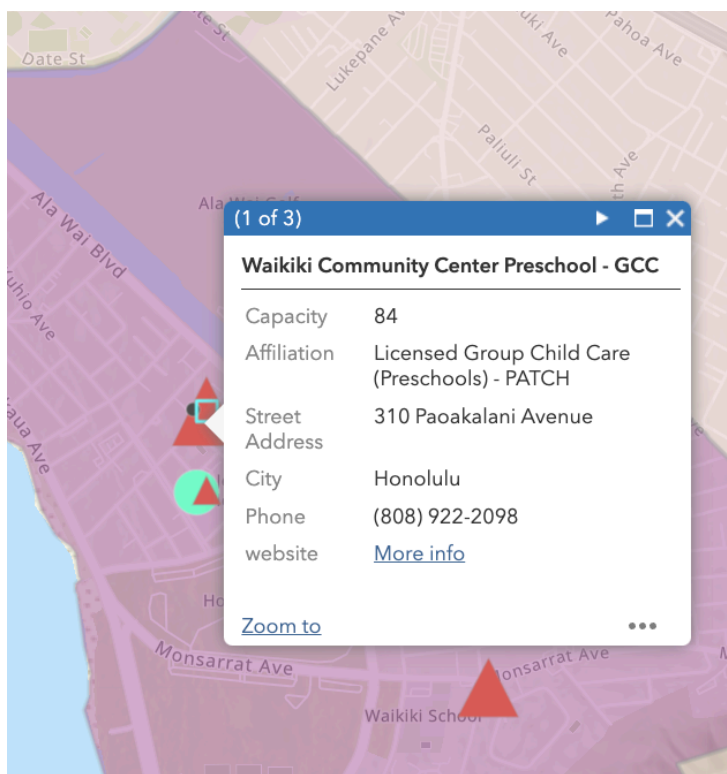
Vision Statement:

To be the heart of our keikis' early education, where children and families learn, grow, and create a better future together. We aspire to develop a generation of confident, compassionate, and engaged individuals who are deeply connected to their community and equipped to make a meaningful difference in the world.

The selected school model/focus area: Community-Focused/Service Learning

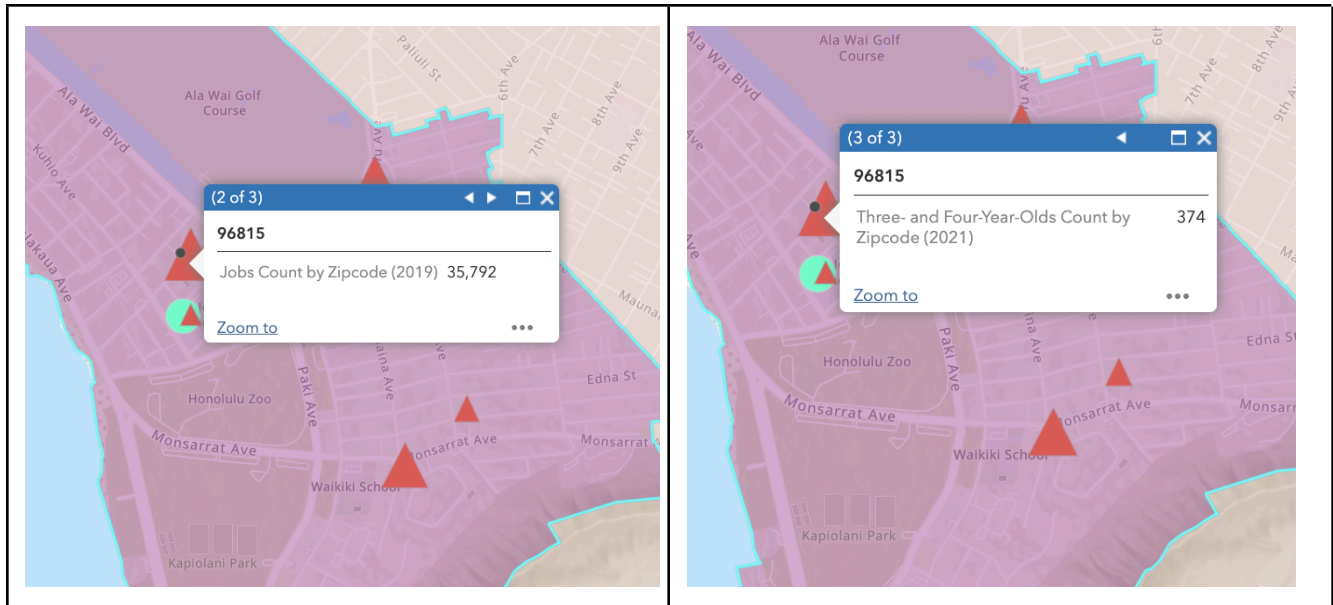
The geographic location of the facility is not indicated on the form. However, the applicant's address is: 310 Paoakalani Avenue Honolulu, HI 96815.

The location might be in close proximity To Waikiki Community Center Preschool.



There are 35,792 jobs in the 96815 area and 374 3- and 4-year-olds.

While few 3- and 4-year-olds live in the area, there are numerous jobs in the area and this could produce the demand from adults who work in this area.



Wonderings:

- What does a Community-Focused/Service Learning preschool model entail?
- How will the needs of students with Special Education Services be addressed?
- How will the site monitor student progress and site progress?
- What qualifications and experience do the school leaders have and how does their capacity impact their ability to fulfill a Charter School's requirements?
- What kind of support services will be provided for students (e.g., counseling, mental health, social-emotional learning)?
- How will the school approach discipline and behavior management?
- How will the school involve parents and the community in supporting student well-being?
- What is the student enrollment process, and are there any specific eligibility requirements?
- How will the school hold itself accountable to both the charter authorizer and the families it serves?
- What is the site capacity?
- What are their long-term goals for the school, and how do they plan to grow or expand in the coming years?
- How will they encourage parent involvement in school activities and decision-making?
- What communication channels are available for parents to stay informed about their child's progress and school events?

Exhibit 2

**2024 Evaluation Team Recommendation Report
Waikiki Community Preschool**



State Public Charter School Commission 2024 Recommendation Report

Charter Application for
Waikiki Community Preschool

Evaluation Team

Ed H. Noh, Ed.D.

Danny Vasconcellos Jr., B.A., M.P.A

Caitlin Kryss, M.Ed.

Miya Nishio, M.Ed.

Ann Abeshima, Ed.D.

Caroline Soga, Ph.D.

Patricia Gooch, M.Ed.

Introduction

In 2012, the Hawai'i State Legislature passed Act 130, replacing the state's previous charter school law, Hawai'i Revised Statutes (HRS) Chapter 302B, with our new law, codified as HRS Chapter 302D. Act 130 instituted a rigorous, transparent accountability system that at the same time honors the autonomy and local decision-making of Hawai'i's charter schools. The law created the State Public Charter School Commission (Commission), assigned it statewide chartering jurisdiction and authority, and directed it to enter into State Public Charter School Contracts (Charter Contract) with every existing charter school and every newly approved charter school applicant.

The 2024 Request for Proposals and the resulting evaluation process are rigorous, thorough, transparent, and demanding. The process is meant to ensure that charter school operators possess the capacity to implement sound strategies, practices, and methodologies. Successful applicants will clearly demonstrate high levels of expertise in the areas of education, school finance, administration, and management as well as high expectations for excellence in professional standards and student achievement.

Process

To ensure a rigorous and objective process, the Commission has adopted standardized application and evaluation procedures aligned with national best practices for authorizing high-performing charter schools. This includes structured evaluation frameworks, evaluator training, and multi-member review teams to ensure consistency and integrity. The process is informed by guidance from national authorizing experts and lessons learned from previous application cycles.

For the 2024 application cycle, each application underwent a comprehensive review by both internal and external evaluators. The evaluation process consisted of the following key components:

Application Review. Evaluators assessed the applicant's responses to the application questions, submitted attachments, and overall proposal, focusing on school purpose, academic, facility/financial, and governance plan.

Capacity Interview. As required by HRS §302D-13(4), evaluators conducted an in-person interview (or virtual if necessary) with the applicant's governing board, proposed school director, and key personnel. This interview allowed for clarification of application responses and further assessment of the applicant's capacity to successfully implement the proposed charter school. The interview was recorded for Commissioner review.

Public Hearing. Applicants presented an overview of their application and vision to the Commission in a public forum, as required by HRS §302D-13(4). This was not an interview but an opportunity for the public to provide input on the application.

Department of Education (DOE) Comments. If applicable, the DOE may submit comments on any application for consideration.

Final Evaluation and Recommendation. Upon concluding this comprehensive evaluation, the team compiled a recommendation report, advising either approval or denial of the application based on the findings.

Report Contents

This Recommendation Report includes the following:

Proposal Overview

Basic information about the proposed school as presented in the application.

Recommendation

An overall judgment regarding whether the proposal meets the criteria for approval.

Evaluation Summary

Analysis of the proposal based on these primary areas of plan development and the capacity of the applicant team to execute the plan as presented:

School Purpose: Purpose overview, mission and vision, development process, governing board makeup, and relationship with affiliated nonprofit entity.

Academic Performance: Mission Aligned Initiative (MAI), student academic performance, system of assessment, and accountability systems.

Facility and Financial Performance: facility description, budget and staffing plan, pre opening funds, budgetary priorities, and fiscal management.

Governance: Governing board skills, contributions, systems of support, transition process, and monitoring of MAI.

Rating Characteristics

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Meets the Standard | The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues. It addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the proposed school expects to operate; and inspires confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively. |
| Does Not Meet the Standard | The response meets the criteria in some respects but has substantial gaps, lacks detail and/or requires additional information in one or more areas and does not reflect a thorough understanding of key issues. It does not provide enough accurate, specific information to show thorough preparation; fails to present a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to operate; and does not inspire confidence in the applicant's capacity to carry out the plan effectively. |

Proposal Overview

Proposed School Name

Waikiki Community Preschool

Mission and Vision

Mission: To inspire young learners to reach their fullest potential through community-focused learning, that celebrates diversity, encourages creativity, and builds strong foundations for future success. We empower children to thrive in a nurturing environment where they are supported by and contribute to their community.

Vision: To be the heart of our keikis' early education, where children and families learn, grow, and create a better future together. We aspire to develop a generation of confident, compassionate, and engaged individuals who are deeply connected to their community and equipped to make a meaningful difference in the world.

Geographic Location

Farrington-Kaiser-Kalani, Kaimuki-McKinley-Roosevelt, Aiea-Moanalua-Radford, Leilehua-Mililani-Waialua, Campbell-Kapolei, Pearl City-Waipahu, Nanakuli-Waianae, Castle-Kahuku, Kailua-Kalaheo

Enrollment Projections

Pre-K Only

| Academic Year Plan | Number of Classrooms | Number of Students |
|--------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 2025 -2026 | 6 | 108 ¹ |

¹ The facility has a maximum capacity of 108 students per DHS licensing, yet the applicant has requested funding for six classrooms, which provides funding for up to 120 students.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Waikiki Community Preschool

RECOMMENDATION

Approve

Summary Analysis

The evaluation team recommends approval of the Waikiki Community Preschool charter application, as it meets the criteria for approval in all four areas: School Purpose, Academic Performance, Facility/Financial Plan, and Governance.

The applicant has a strong foundation in early childhood education, operating as part of the Waikiki Community Center (WCC) since 1978. WCC has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to serving families in Waikiki, providing high-quality, licensed, and nationally accredited preschool services. The transition to a public charter school increases access to tuition-free early childhood education, particularly for ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families who face financial barriers to high-quality preschool options. The WCC board played a critical role in evaluating the feasibility of the transition, ensuring alignment with the organization's mission and maintaining financial sustainability. The WCC board also led the recruitment of a governing board with expertise in education, finance, nonprofit leadership, and community advocacy, ensuring the school has strong oversight and strategic leadership.

The academic plan builds upon an established curriculum framework using The Creative Curriculum and the Keiki Building Community (KBC) service-learning model. The program is developmentally appropriate, integrates experiential and community-based learning, and aligns with Board of Education (BOE) Policy E-700 and the Commission's Characteristics of High-Quality Charter Schools. The proposed curriculum includes clear instructional design, yearlong curriculum maps, and structured formative and summative assessments, ensuring a data-driven approach to student growth. The applicant outlines Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to differentiate instruction, ensuring that the needs of English learners, at-risk students, and students needing additional interventions are met. The governing board has a structured oversight process for monitoring academic outcomes, family engagement, and professional development, with regular reporting to drive continuous improvement.

The facility and financial plan is sound and well-developed, leveraging the existing WCC preschool facility, which meets DHS licensing and National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) accreditation standards. The financial model prioritizes classroom instruction and student services, with 71% of the budget allocated to staffing and 85% directed toward direct classroom expenditures, including food, supplies, and professional development. The school's first-year budget of \$1,161,760 would be funded through pre-k state charter school funding (\$1,025,000), grants (\$75,000), and USDA reimbursements (\$60,760). WCC has committed \$75,000 in pre-opening financial support and \$24,000 for administrative costs, ensuring a stable transition to charter school status. The governing board will oversee budget adherence, risk monitoring, and compliance with fiscal policies, ensuring long-term financial sustainability.

The governance plan is well-structured, ensuring clear oversight responsibilities, financial controls, and strategic planning measures. The WCC board played an instrumental role in the development of the application and has structured a governance transition plan to train and mentor the new preschool board. The governing board will oversee policy development, financial management, and school leadership evaluation, with a focus on data-driven decision-making and continuous improvement.

While the application meets the criteria for approval, there are challenges important to note around extended childcare needs, enrollment, and teacher licensure. The transition from a full-day, year-round program to a school-day charter model raises concerns about access to before- and after-school care and intersession programming. While not required as part of the application, the applicant acknowledged these services as a critical need for the working families they aim to serve, yet did not provide a comprehensive plan to address them.

DHS licensed their facility with a maximum capacity of 108 students which includes their toddler (2-year-old) program. The applicant has requested funding for six classrooms, which provides funding for up to 120 students.

Another key challenge is staffing and teacher licensure. While the applicant outlines a general plan to recruit six licensed preschool teachers, the statewide teacher shortage presents a significant challenge to fulfilling this requirement within the designated time frame. The feasibility of current staff obtaining licensure within the three-year emergency hire period as required by the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) remains uncertain, and some current teachers may not be eligible for licensure, leading to potential staff displacement.

While challenges remain, the recommendation is to approve the application as the proposed school will expand access to early childhood education in Waikiki, providing tuition-free, high quality preschool options aligned with Hawai'i's strategic goals for early learning.

Summary of Section Ratings

Opening and maintaining a successful, high-performing charter school depends on having a complete, coherent plan and identifying highly capable individuals to execute that plan. It is not an endeavor for which strengths in some areas can compensate for material weakness in others.

Therefore, in order to receive a recommendation for approval, the application must receive a "Meets the Standard" rating in all areas.

School Purpose Meets

Academic Performance Meets

Facility/Financial Meets

Governance Meets

SCHOOL PURPOSE

RATING

Waikiki Community Preschool

Meets

Plan Summary

Waikiki Community Preschool is focused on providing high-quality, tuition-free early childhood education through a community-based, service-learning model. The applicant aims to inspire young learners by fostering creativity, diversity, and strong community connections. Its mission is to prepare children for kindergarten and beyond by integrating experiential learning, cultural awareness, and social responsibility into a nurturing environment. The vision emphasizes developing confident, compassionate, and engaged individuals who contribute meaningfully to their communities.

The school plans to enroll students from multiple complex areas across Honolulu, including Aiea-Moanalua-Radford, Campbell-Kapolei, and Farrington-Kaiser-Kalani. Governance will be led by a board of community leaders, with WCC providing administrative oversight. The school's financial model is based on pre-k state charter school funding, grants, and USDA reimbursements, with a budget supporting 17 full-time staff, including teachers, assistant teachers, and administrative personnel. The program is designed to align with kindergarten readiness standards, ensuring cognitive, social-emotional, language, and physical development. By leveraging WCC's existing infrastructure and partnerships, Waikiki Community Preschool seeks to expand access to early learning opportunities while maintaining financial sustainability and strong community engagement.

Analysis

The applicant meets the standard for approval in their school purpose.

Strengths of School Purpose

The applicant has a long-standing presence in the community, operating under WCC since 1978. The center has established itself as a reliable provider of early childhood education, serving families who live and work in Waikiki. As a licensed and nationally accredited preschool, WCC has a strong governance structure, sustainable financial systems, and a commitment to providing high-quality early learning experiences. The proposed transition to a charter school aligns with the community's need to increase access to tuition-free, high-quality preschool education for ALICE families, ensuring that children have access to early learning opportunities regardless of financial barriers.

The WCC board played a key role in evaluating the feasibility of converting the preschool into a public charter school, ensuring the proposal aligned with its mission and financial sustainability. The WCC board led the development of the application by assessing the impact on the community, defining governance structures, and recruiting a governing board with expertise in education, finance, nonprofit leadership, and community advocacy. WCC board members contributed strategic oversight to ensure the school's mission and vision were reflected in its academic, operational, and financial plans. The WCC board also reviewed budgetary projections, staffing plans, and compliance measures to ensure the transition would meet regulatory and accreditation requirements while maintaining financial stability.

The applicant supports whole-child development by integrating cognitive, social-emotional, language, and physical growth while fostering meaningful family and community engagement. The mission and vision of the proposed charter school aligns with BOE Policy E-700 and the SPCSC's Characteristics of

High-Quality Charter Schools, ensuring a focus on innovative practices, cultural relevance, and community-based learning,

Weaknesses of School Purpose

Despite these strengths, there are concerns regarding the school's ability to meet the needs of its community with the transition. The applicant has acknowledged that full-day, year-round care is a critical need for the families they intend to serve. While not a requirement, the proposed shift to a school-day model does not include a clear plan for before- and after-school care or intersession programming, raising concerns about how the transition may impact working families who rely on extended childcare.

The transition from a private preschool to a charter school will reduce the total number of available seats to the community, as the facility's maximum capacity is currently 108 toddler and pre-k students per DHS licensing. Although the applicant has proposed six classrooms, which accommodate up to 120 students, some classrooms are physically smaller and only allow for 12 students while other classrooms accommodate 24 per their DHS licensing. Additionally, the current program serves children under the age of three and has a waitlist of 10 toddlers, but with the shift to a public charter model, only students aged three and older will be eligible for enrollment. This change will eliminate early childhood care options for families with younger children, further limiting the availability of toddler care in the community.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

RATING

Waikiki Community Preschool

Meets

Plan Summary

The applicant's academic plan is centered around Keiki Building Community (KBC), a service-learning model that integrates experiential learning, community engagement, and curriculum-based instruction to foster early childhood development. The program aligns with the school's mission by empowering students to engage with real-world challenges, fostering a sense of belonging, responsibility, and civic engagement from an early age.

The curriculum is structured around themes such as environmental stewardship, kupuna care, and community involvement, encouraging children to participate in hands-on projects that connect learning to their surroundings. The curriculum aligns with the Academic Performance Framework by establishing clear developmental objectives across cognitive, social-emotional, language, and physical domains while using formative and summative assessments, including portfolios and teacher observations, to measure student growth.

The applicant's instructional approach supports multi-tiered learning strategies (MTSS), ensuring that diverse student needs are met, including English learners and students needing additional support. Assessment tools, such as The Creative Curriculum and the Individual Child Development Assessment (ICDA), provide data-driven insights to refine instruction and promote continuous learning.

Analysis

The applicant meets the standard for approval in their academic plan.

Strengths of the Academic Plan

Waikiki Community Preschool has an established academic foundation, utilizing The Creative Curriculum and its KBC service-learning framework to integrate experiential learning, community engagement, and developmental domains into its early childhood program. The preschool follows early learning guidelines and combines Creative Curriculum assessments with an in-house Individual Child Development Assessment (ICDA) to track student progress. These assessment tools align with the school's mission to foster academic, social-emotional, and physical growth while engaging families in student learning.

The proposed academic plan aligns with BOE Policy E-700 and the SPCSC's Characteristics of High-Quality Charter Schools, demonstrating a commitment to innovative educational practices, diverse learning opportunities, and continuous improvement. The applicant provided a yearlong curriculum mapped to the Academic Performance Framework (APF), ensuring clear developmental objectives and assessment measures. Instructional practices will be data-driven, using formative and summative assessments, family feedback, and professional development to refine teaching strategies and support student success.

The proposed assessment and accountability systems involve lesson plan reviews, classroom observations, and monthly teacher-director meetings to ensure curriculum fidelity. The governing board will receive regular updates on student progress, family engagement, and assessment outcomes, contributing to oversight and continuous improvement. The use of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) will help differentiate learning to meet the needs of all students, including English learners, at-risk students, and those needing additional interventions.

Weaknesses of Academic Plan

A key challenge in the academic plan is ensuring the preschool meets teacher licensure requirements for a charter school. Currently, the teaching staff meets Department of Human Services (DHS) qualifications, but none hold a Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) license, which is required for public charter school educators. The applicant has outlined a general plan to recruit six licensed preschool teachers and develop a professional growth pathway for current staff to meet HTSB requirements. However, given Hawai'i's ongoing teacher shortage, finding and retaining six qualified teachers within the required timeframe presents a significant challenge.

The applicant's contingency plan includes supporting current teachers in obtaining licensure, but the feasibility of completing the requirements within the three years required of emergency hire status teachers, according to HTSB remains uncertain. Additionally, some current teachers may not be eligible for licensure, which could lead to staff displacement and instructional disruptions. A more detailed strategy addressing teacher recruitment, retention, and professional development pathways would strengthen the application and ensure a stable and compliant instructional workforce.

FACILITY/FINANCIAL PLAN

RATING

Waikiki Community Preschool

Meets

Plan Summary

Waikiki Community Preschool will operate within the existing WCC preschool facility. This location has successfully supported the private preschool for 47 years and meets DHS and NECPA standards, ensuring compliance with safety, security, and age-appropriate learning environments. The facility's central Waikiki location provides convenient access for working families, supporting strong community engagement and family participation in school activities.

Financially, the school's first-year budget is \$1,161,760, with primary funding sources including state charter school funding totaling \$1,025,000 for six classrooms, grants totaling \$75,000, and USDA reimbursements totaling \$60,760. Staffing accounts for 71% of expenses, prioritizing high-quality instruction and professional development. Facility costs represent 13% of the budget, and WCC will provide administrative and operational support, ensuring cost efficiency by leveraging existing infrastructure.

The budget projects a modest surplus in the first two years, allowing financial flexibility. The governing board will oversee financial planning, monitor variances, and ensure compliance with fiscal policies.

Analysis

The applicant meets the standard for approval in their facility/financial plan.

Strengths of Facility/Financial Plan

The applicant has structured its financial and facility plan around the existing WCC preschool facility, ensuring a cost-effective transition to a charter school model. The facility has been operating for 47 years as a licensed and accredited early childhood center, meeting safety, security, and learning environment standards. Its central location in Waikiki positions it well to serve working families while promoting community engagement and accessibility. The facility's current compliance with DHS and NECPA standards ensures the school will meet safety, maintenance, and educational space requirements without requiring additional renovations or start-up costs.

The financial model supports high-quality classroom instruction and student services, with 71% of the budget allocated to staffing and 85% of total expenditures supporting classroom operations, including food, supplies, and professional development. Facility costs account for 13% of the total budget, with WCC's administrative and operational support helping to minimize overhead. The first-year budget of \$1,161,760 is funded through state charter school funding (\$1,025,000), grants (\$75,000), and USDA reimbursements (\$60,760).

WCC has committed pre-opening financial support, including a \$75,000 grant and \$24,000 for administrative costs to ensure a stable transition. The WCC board has also approved absorbing pre-opening administrative costs and will provide additional consultant support to assist with the transition. Financial oversight will be managed by the school's governing board, which will regularly review budget adherence, risk monitoring, and compliance with fiscal policies, ensuring financial transparency and accountability.

Weakness of Facility/Financial Plan

While the financial plan projects a surplus in the first two years, concerns remain regarding enrollment capacity and long-term financial sustainability. The applicant has proposed six classrooms, which provides funding for up to 120 students; however, the facility has a maximum capacity of 108 students per DHS licensing, due to some classrooms being smaller and unable to accommodate the standard number of students. There is concern that these unused funds could be better allocated to another facility that has the capacity to maximize student enrollment and fully utilize available charter school funding.

Additionally, transitioning to a public charter introduces new financial complexities, particularly related to personnel costs and union requirements. While the school's budget accounts for teacher salaries and operational expenses, there is limited detail on how the applicant will manage the transition to collective bargaining agreements and potential increases in personnel costs over time.

GOVERNANCE PLAN

Waikiki Community Preschool

RATING

Meets

Plan Summary

The applicant governing board for Waikiki Community Preschool consists of professionals with expertise in early childhood education, nonprofit governance, legal compliance, financial management, and community leadership. Governing board members, including educators, policy advocates, and business leaders, ensure the oversight of curriculum development, operational planning, and financial sustainability.

The WCC board played a key role in the charter application, ensuring financial feasibility, mission alignment, and operational planning. The WCC board also led the development of the charter school governing board, identifying and recruiting members based on expertise and community representation.

If approved, the charter school governing board will implement fiscal and academic oversight policies, review monthly financial and performance reports, and ensure compliance with state regulations. The board will oversee the school director's performance, manage risk, and maintain stakeholder engagement through family and community involvement.

Analysis

The applicant meets the standard for approval in their governance plan.

Strengths of the Governance Plan

The governing board for the proposed charter school has been strategically assembled to ensure a diverse range of expertise necessary for developing, launching, and operating the school. Board members bring experience in educational leadership, nonprofit governance, community engagement, legal compliance, and financial oversight, all of which will be critical to the school's success. During the capacity interview, board members expressed a strong commitment to the school's mission, reinforcing their alignment with the preschool's core values and goals.

The WCC board played a pivotal role in the development of the governing board and the charter school application. The WCC board identified the necessary skills and expertise needed for the preschool's leadership, curated a list of potential board nominees, conducted outreach and selection, and ultimately approved the final board composition. Additionally, the WCC board treasurer conducted a financial analysis to ensure the feasibility and sustainability of the school's budget and staffing plan. After a thorough review, the WCC board unanimously approved the charter school application, demonstrating its confidence in the proposed governance structure.

The governance framework includes clear systems for oversight, ensuring alignment with the school's mission, academic performance, and financial stability. The governing board will be responsible for policy development, financial monitoring, and school leadership evaluation, with defined systems for budget monitoring, risk management, and corrective action planning. Regular data-driven decision-making processes are embedded into the governance plan, emphasizing continuous improvement through performance evaluations, professional development, and programmatic adjustments.

As part of the governance transition plan, the WCC board will support the new preschool governing board by providing training and mentorship during the pre-opening phase. Once operational, the preschool board will shift its focus to strategic oversight, ensuring compliance with fiscal policies, academic frameworks, and operational benchmarks. A structured policy implementation process will be in place, covering areas such as financial management, ethical governance, and academic accountability.

The applicant also provided a clear system for monitoring and evaluating the school's MAI, the KBC program. The governing board will receive regular reports on the program's academic impact, social-emotional growth, and community engagement, based on curriculum assessments, kindergarten readiness measures, and survey data from families and community partners. This structured approach will ensure accountability and continuous program refinement to support the school's long-term success.

Weaknesses of Governance Plan

While the governance plan is comprehensive and well-structured, its effectiveness will depend on the governing board's ability to execute its oversight responsibilities in a public charter school setting. The transition from a private preschool governance model to a charter school board structure introduces new regulatory requirements and compliance measures requiring board training and ongoing capacity building.

Additionally, while the applicant has outlined a data-driven oversight process, further details on how the governing board will identify and respond to early indicators of financial or academic distress would strengthen the plan. More clarification for implementing governance policies, board evaluation processes, and stakeholder engagement strategies would provide additional confidence in the governing board's ability to adapt to the operational complexities of a charter school model.

Evaluator Biographies

Ed H. Noh, Ed.D.

Dr. Noh is the Executive Director of the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission, bringing over 30 years of experience in education. Prior to this role, he served as the Complex Area Superintendent for the Castle-Kahuku Complex Area, overseeing 16 schools with more than 7,400 students. Dr. Noh's leadership experience includes serving as the School Director of Ka'ōhāo Public Charter School, where he achieved top-tier elementary school rankings, annual enrollment growth, and a balanced budget while introducing new classroom technologies.

Dr. Noh holds a Doctorate in Professional Educational Practice from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and a Master's Degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Washington. Dr. Noh's extensive background in educational leadership and his commitment to fostering innovation and excellence make him a valuable asset to Hawai'i's public charter school system.

Danny J. Vasconcellos, Jr. B.A., M.P.A.

Danny J. Vasconcellos, Jr. serves as the Finance & Administrations Director for the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission. An alumnus of 'Iolani School, he earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. His professional background includes six years with the State Office of the Auditor and experience with the Hawai'i State Legislature. Prior to his current role, Vasconcellos contributed to the Commission as the Organizational Performance Specialist.

Caitlin Kryss, M.Ed.

Caitlin Kryss is currently an Early Learning Specialist and Instructional Coach with the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission. She brings more than a decade of experience in early childhood education and care in Hawai'i. Prior to her current position, she taught at a private Montessori school, was a pre-K teacher at a public charter school in Puna, Hawai'i, and was a lecturer at Hawai'i Community College's Early Childhood Education Department. She holds a B.S. in Conservation Biology and a B.A. in Marine Science from the University of Hawai'i at Hilo and received a Master's in Education, specializing in Early Childhood Education, from Northcentral University. She is a licensed teacher with the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board, a certified National Geographic Educator and CLASS observer for pre-K to third grade. She is also a member of the Early Childhood Educator Excellence and Equity Project (ECE3) Taskforce. She is passionate about 'āina-based education and nurturing future generations of planetary stewards.

Miya Nishio, M.Ed.

Miya Nishio serves as an Early Learning Coach for the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission, bringing approximately a decade of experience in early childhood education. She earned both her Bachelor of Science in Biology and Master of Education in Early Childhood Education from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Prior to her current role, Miya worked with Parents and Children Together as a Head Start teacher and later as an Early Childhood Education Coach. She is committed to promoting equity and social justice, striving to provide all young children and their families with access to high-quality early learning experiences.

Ann Abeshima, Ed.D.

Dr. Ann Abeshima has over 25 years of experience in child and family development, early childhood education, and higher education instruction. She is an Associate Professor at Honolulu Community College, where she teaches early childhood education courses and mentors students. Her expertise includes direct care and education of young children, teacher coaching, family engagement, and leadership in early learning settings. She has held roles as a mentor coach, program director at Seagull Schools, and adjunct faculty at Chaminade University, contributing to program accreditation and quality

improvement initiatives. Dr. Abeshima holds a Doctorate in Education from the University of Southern California and a Master of Arts in Human Development from Pacific Oaks College, with a strong passion for advancing professionalism and leadership in early childhood education.

Caroline Soga, Ph.D.

Dr. Caroline Soga is an Associate Professor at Honolulu Community College with extensive experience in early childhood education, coaching, and program development. She previously served as a Pre-K Coach for the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission and an Early Childhood Education Coach at Parents and Children Together. With a doctorate in Educational Psychology from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and a master's in Early Childhood Education from Loyola Marymount University, Dr. Soga has contributed to professional development initiatives, research publications, and program accreditation. Her passion lies in fostering high-quality early learning environments and supporting educators in implementing best practices.

Patricia Gooch, M.Ed

Patricia Gooch has dedicated her career to early childhood education as an instructor, program coordinator, and consultant. She retired as a Professor from the Early Childhood Education Department at Honolulu Community College, where she also coordinated the Alani Children's Center at Kapi'olani Community College. With a master's in Education and Montessori certification from the College of Notre Dame and a background in Business Administration from Michigan State University, she has taught at Chaminade University and provided training for early learning professionals. Currently, she serves as an Early Childhood Education consultant for the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Commission, supporting professional development efforts statewide.