

211-2

Jerry Maeda

### Education: On a County Level

Do the educational needs of a child living in a rural community on Molokai differ from those of an urban teen on Oahu? Of course they do. So why is Hawaii's education system controlled by the state government, rather than separate county branches? Hawaii is the only state that's education system is run by the state government, and not-so coincidentally, Hawaii's standardized test scores remain unimpressive compared to the rest of the nation. If Hawaii's education system were to be broken down and run by the four counties, the state could oversee each county's progress and it would help funding go to the where needs to be, thus improving education in Hawaii.

As of 2009, on average \$12,399 are spent on each student, per year in public schools in Hawaii. When compared to other states, Hawaii ranks 11<sup>th</sup> for the highest amount of money spent per student every year, although Hawaii ranks in the bottom 5 states for SAT scores. All this money is being spent on each student, but who is to judge where this child needs this money to be spent? Currently, board members on the state level decide where government funding goes, but if the counties decide where funding goes, they would be able to give a more personalized perspective that reflects the unique needs of the different counties. Directing funding to where it needs to be on a county level allows the current needs of the different counties to be identified and acted upon more efficiently. This better application of funding would help address the needs of specific counties better, which would help Hawaii's education as a whole.

In virtually all states other than Hawaii, the county educational branches are supervised by the state government that makes sure the counties must meet certain state requirements. This

makes the community strive to do well at a county level. Creating this internal motivation will help make people throughout the system work harder to satisfy their overseers

T. C. Ching wanted to improve the lives of the people through education, and if it meant decentralizing the state-run education system, Ching would support the idea, and he would likely help in the movement to change the system. A proper education is the foundation in which many other ideals are built on, which starts with strong education system.

The statement "But everyone else is doing it," is often not a good reason to justify an action. However, when it comes to education, Hawaii has been lacking in strength, and it just so happens that it is the only state that has a single, state-run education system. By decentralizing Hawaii's education from a state-run system to a county-run structure, it would allow for better aimed funding, and stronger incentive for individual counties to produce results. Just as T. C. Ching would want, the decentralization of Hawaii's education system would allow for more personalized education that would create a foundation for a strong new generation.