

Data-Substantiated Evaluation Assertions About Pihana Nā Mamo, a Project Funded by the U.S. Department of Education Through the Native Hawaiian Education Act (A summary report prepared for the U.S. Government Accountability Office [GAO] in advance of its August 14, 2007 performance-audit site visit)

**Background**

*In preparation for the August 14, 2007 performance-audit site visit by the GAO, we developed this summary, which includes data sources for each evaluation assertion.*

Pihana Nā Mamo: The Native Hawaiian Special Education Project (Pihana) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education through the Native Hawaiian Education Act. Since 2000, Pihana has sought to improve the education of Native Hawaiian children. Authorized through Title VII of the No Child Left Behind Act, Pihana has six components: (a) the implementation of research-based reading programs (b) mentoring and transition support for secondary students, (c) parent and community involvement, (d) project administration, (e) curriculum materials, and (f) program evaluation.

**Pihana is mostly in high-poverty schools.**

Figure 1 shows the percentages of students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch for the state and elementary schools in Pihana’s reading component for at least four years and continuing in 2006–07. Project start dates are in parentheses. *With one exception, all elementary Pihana reading schools were at notably higher-than-average poverty levels.*

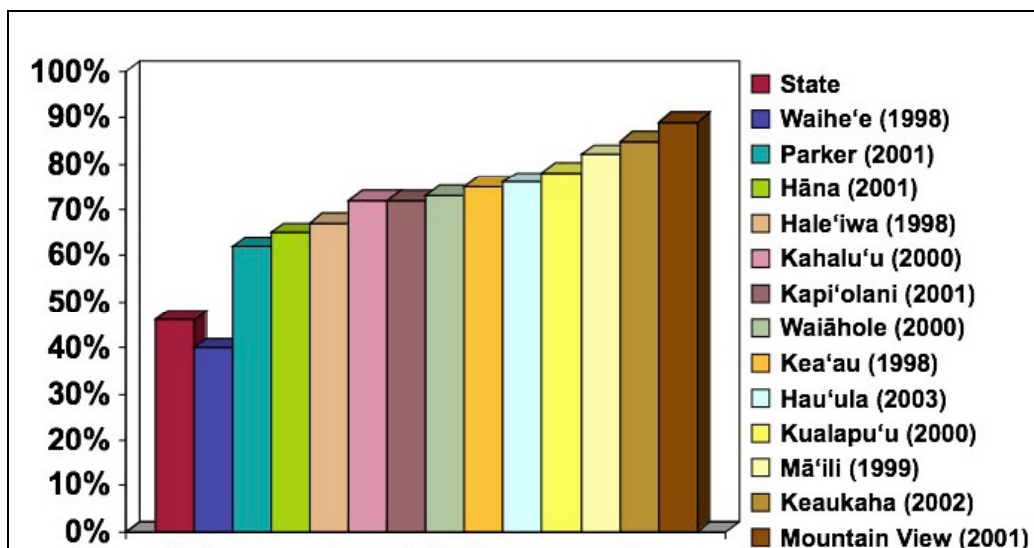


Figure 1. Percentages of Pihana elementary school reading students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch in 2006.

Data source: Hawai'i Department of Education (<http://arch.k12.hi.us/school/ssir/ssir.html#>). To verify Hale'iwa's data, click "2006," click "Central," click "Haleiwa," then go to page 2.

**Pihana served large numbers of participants.**

*Each year, Pihana served about 9,237 students, 489 teachers, 600 parents or community members, and 50 school administrators.*

*Data sources:* Schools' enrollments are in the previously listed data source. The number of participants in the secondary-level reading program are from the project database. During on-site registration, project staff recorded the number of participants. Between 2003 and 2005, staff held 2,643 sessions with students and 1,571 sessions with family members. Project schools annually numbered about 35. Our estimate that 50 administrators participated annually is based on the number of schools.

**Pihana students' reading scores were above normative expectations.**

*High percentages of project schools met adequate yearly progress (AYP) or had reading scores meeting AYP standards.* Of the 12 schools that had been in Pihana more than 3 years and that had adequate sample sizes, 8 fully met AYP in 2006–2007. Three other schools' reading scores, in overall percentages, met AYP reading standards. The school that did not meet AYP in reading showed a gain from 2002–2003 to 2006–2007 of 24 points in the percentage meeting the AYP reading standard.

*Data source:* Hawai'i State Department of Education Systems Accountability Office: <http://arch.k12.hi.us/school/nclb/nclb.html>

The Stanford Achievement Test, 9th ed. (SAT9) was also used statewide. Given the relatively low socioeconomic-status levels of the project schools' students, when they were within 7 percentage points of the national norm for scoring "average" or "above average," in our professional judgment, they were performing above normative expectations. Under this criterion, *14 of the 16 schools' third graders performed above normative expectations on the SAT9 in 2004.*

*Data source:* Hawai'i State Department of Education Systems Accountability Office: <http://arch.k12.hi.us/school/trends/trends.html#>. To verify 2004 SAT9 reading scores for Hale'iwa, click "2004," click "Central," find "WAIALUA COMPLEX," click "Haleiwa Elem" under it; near the bottom, look under SAT 9, Reading, School Year 2003-2004.

**The graduation rates for Pihana Kāko'o students were beyond normative expectations.**

Over four years, 7 of the 11 schools in the project's student-support component had graduation rates of 100% in at least one year. Project students in two other schools had graduation rates greater than 90% in at least one of the years. A rural Pihana school's principal asserted, *"I really would attribute our Pihana Nā Mamo project to helping give us one of the best graduation rates in the state."*

*Data source:* Hawai‘i Department of Education graduation records. The principal’s statement appears in the project-created evaluation video.

**Pihana was rigorously externally evaluated; findings were largely positive.**

In 2002, *the Pihana program officer from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted a site visit and evaluation.* He reported, “The review consisted of interviews of project staff, subcontract staff, and . . . interactions with school personnel and students, and direct observation of classrooms and school activities. . . *Pihana Nā Mamo. . . has produced commendable results.*”

*Data source:* Project report filed with OSEP.

We used a formal request-for-proposal process for the external evaluations. For the formative of the evaluation, we contracted Pacific Resources for Education and Learning. For the summative evaluation, we contracted Evaluation Research Services (ERS).

The ERS evaluation included observations, interviews, and focus groups as well as a rigorous comparison-group analysis. From the final external evaluation report: “*Third-grade students attending Pihana Nā Mamo-funded Heluhelu [reading] schools in 2004 and in 2005 scored higher on the Stanford-9 Reading Test than a group of students from similar schools, matched on gender, free/reduced lunch status, Special Education status, and ethnicity. . . Teachers, administrators, and students reported very favorably on the [reading] program. Similar levels of satisfaction were reported for the student-support and parent-involvement components.*”

*Data source:* Final report submitted by external evaluator, Greg Roberts.

**Some of Pihana’s major initiatives have been incorporated into the Hawai‘i Department of Education’s (HDOE’s) regular program.**

Pihana’s reading program became the model for HDOE’s participation in the Reading Excellence Act (Reading First). HDOE incorporated Pihana’s approach to students’ behavior. Pihana’s focus on parent involvement is evident in new state legislation. Pihana’s use of quarterly assessments was adopted to a major extent for special education in HDOE’s Response to Intervention (RTI) efforts.

*Data source:* HDOE Superintendent’s office.

**Concluding remarks**

*Pihana Nā Mamo served large numbers of students, teachers, parents, and administrators. Although from mostly low socioeconomic-status schools, project students exceeded normative expectations in reading and in graduation rates. Rigorous external evaluations corroborated the project’s successes, including project students’ outperforming a comparison group in reading and the incorporation of project initiatives into the HDOE’s regular program.*