

Keiki Caucus Meeting Notes
Tuesday, August 15, 2006

The Keiki Caucus meeting was convened in room 229 at the Capitol on Tuesday, August 15, 2006 at 11:30 am. Sen. Suzanne Chun Oakland and Rep. Dennis Arakaki conducted the meeting. The meeting was well attended by representatives of all the different private and public organizations that provide services, teach providers and advocate for the needs of children.

The focus of the meeting was on **obesity and physical fitness**. What is being done to prevent obesity and related medical and social complications?

The introduction reviewed the situation in Hawaii. Our statistics overall are not good but we are generally not as bad as the mainland. However in selected ethnic groups and by socioeconomic status we are not good. The health impact of obesity is well known.

With respect to prevention, the DOH is developing a Statewide Nutrition & Physical Activity Plan. This is still in process.

The UH Center on the Family is developing educational materials which can be used in the community and by the family.

WIC and the Primary Care Health Centers are using materials for parent education, aimed at the early years, birth to five years of age.

Children spend so much time in school that the schools are a natural focus for programs to deal with the "obesity problem".

The DOE is gradually improving the nutritional value of meals and vending machine offerings in the schools. It is now admitted that meal offerings are influenced by the Department of Agriculture and the need to use farm products such as corn, sugar and soy beans. This leaves out fruit and vegetables. But the tide is turning for the schools and for WIC as well.

The conflict over the need for physical education and requirements of No Child Left Behind continues. The physical education, physical fitness proponents are unrelenting. The focus now is on some way to lengthen the school day so that there is time physical education and also music, art and electives. This costs money but if we get healthier the savings in health costs will more than make up for the costs. And we will be better people. It may take another ten years but I think this approach will eventually win out. I can see progress over the three years I have been listening to the arguments.

Lastly, there are a host of ad hoc programs out there, some in schools and some in the community. For example Farrington High School has a program called "In Motion". It is supported by the Dept. of Parks and Recreation. They have classes for teens (Hip-Hop) and for adults, parents and teachers in the school. Basic Body Fitness, Exercise for Educators, Salsa and Cha-Cha. The originator of this program, Gregg Agena, won a national award for his work.