



STATE OF HAWAII  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2360  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

August 1, 2014

Dear Parents,

Aloha! We have been working hard to improve our public school system. I'd like to bring to your attention some exciting changes coming up in School Year 2014-15 that will support your child's academic success.

Our goal is to prepare all students with the skills necessary to succeed in a career, college, and as global citizens. The **Hawaii Common Core** sets out what your child needs to know and be able to do in order to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Hawaii Common Core creates clear expectations in key areas: reading, writing, speaking and listening, language and mathematics. More information on the Hawaii Common Core, including ways you can support your child at home, can be found at [HawaiiPublicSchools.org](http://HawaiiPublicSchools.org).

The transition to the new learning expectations in the Hawaii Common Core also comes with a new annual state test to replace the reading and math Hawaii State Assessment (HSA), called the **Smarter Balanced Assessment System**. Unlike the old HSA, these new tests will measure what students know *and* how well they can apply their knowledge to real world situations. Just like the HSA, the Smarter Balanced Assessments will be administered in the spring of each school year, for grades 3-8 and 11, in English language arts and math.

The combination of the new Hawaii Common Core and the Smarter Balanced Assessments means a more rigorous system that values the deeper knowledge and skills that are particularly important to students' futures, including problem solving, writing, and critical thinking. At the end of this school year, you may see a change in your child's test scores. This does not mean students are learning less or that teachers and schools are performing worse than last year. This first-year of Smarter Balanced results sets a **new baseline** that, going forward, will provide a clearer picture of how well students are progressing toward graduating ready for college and careers. The Hawaii Common Core are new, challenging learning expectations and we know students may struggle at first. We will continue supporting teachers and principals as they shift instruction to meet students' needs.

Please visit our website at [HawaiiPublicSchools.org](http://HawaiiPublicSchools.org) to learn more about how we are working to make positive changes to our public schools. We welcome your feedback in our efforts as we work together toward shared goals in serving all students and preparing them with the skills to succeed in life.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Matayoshi".

Kathryn S. Matayoshi  
Superintendent