I envision myself teaching 9th grade English at Kapolei High School when I become certified as a teacher. To prepare myself for my students I need to have a better understanding of who they are and what influences them. Based on the information provided in the DOE School Status and Improvement Report (SSIR) for Kapolei School year 2007-
2008. Kapolei is one of the largest high schools in Hawai‘i with a total enrollment of 2,285 students. Making up a majority of these students are Filipino (25.8%) part-Hawaiian (22.3%), and Caucasians (12.9%). Students at Kapolei are not considered, on average, to be poor, but there are almost 20% of the students that receive free or reduced-cost lunches and that 5.8% of the community’s households are receiving some sort of Public Assistance income and have children living in poverty. There are a low number of students (253) in Special Education programs and 41 students with a limited English proficiency. Another fact that caught my attention was the graduation rate. A startling 10.3% of the students dropped out of high school during the 2007-2008 year. Kapolei also had 95.3% of their seniors graduate, which is always a good thing; I only wish that number were 100%.

Some of the students living in these households may experience social problems that may affect their academic achievements, but this probably is true of most students. According to the Touch the Future…Text, urban students, if Kapolei can be considered urban, are more likely to engage in risky behavior than suburban students. However, according to Hawai‘i News Now, some Kapolei students were bullied and taunted on-line via MySpace resulting in a fight with students from other schools after a football game. One Kapolei was targeted in the fight just because he was wearing Kapolei colors. In a School Quality Survey, about 55% of the students surveyed were satisfied with the school and all perceptions were higher than the state averages. While the Student Safety and Well-being perception was higher than the state average, it sill was just below 50%. That means that many students at one time perceived that they did not feel safe at their school. Attendance and average daily absences are definitely below the state average, and 156 students or 7% of the school population were suspended with disorderly conduct or trespassing making up almost half of the offensives. Thirty percent of the suspensions involved either theft or drugs indicating that a majority of Kapolei students mostly behave, there is some problems at the school.

Kapolei students today have almost an unlimited amount of information at their fingertips because they have access to computers and internet at school. An article from the Kaiser Family indicated that media use among teenagers was up over 7 hours per day and that the Kapolei complex, according to the Superintendent’s Report, only 50% of the students get 20 minutes of recess time daily. Obviously this will challenge students’ ability to remain healthy and active. In addition, the article entitled, “Why Sleep Matters” in Touch the Future…Teach suggests that my Kapolei students need to have at least 8.5 hours of sleep per night, in order to function properly in school. The article also mentioned that students will be more attentive later in the morning, so one school in Minnesota changed the start time of their school from 7:20 a.m. to 8:40 a.m., and they experienced more alert and attentive students, and fewer suffering from depression. That would make sense because I have seen from personal experience that many of the activities of teenagers is talking and texting on the phone until after midnight and that they do not get those 8.5 hours of sleep.

How have students at Kapolei changed?

Throughout the years, it is evident that students across the nation have begun to change, demographically speaking because the US student population is increasing with races becoming
much more mixed in schools. Living in Hawaii, trends are a bit harder to see because majority of the students here come from diverse backgrounds. However, comparing the 2001 SSIR (first year that Kapolei was opened) for Kapolei to the 2008 one that I described above, the school demographics of the 373 students attending still reflected that Filipino, part-Hawaiian, and White still made up the major ethnicities. The number of students receiving free lunch was the same about 20% and SPED students still made up a small portion of the student body. So, in essence, not much has changed over the last 7 years. However, 57 students were suspended in 2001 for disorderly conduct indicating that violence and school safety has always remained an issue for Kapolei.

What laws protect the rights of Kapolei students?

One law that I chose was that all Kapolei students have the right to have equal access and funding to sports facilities and programs regardless of gender. This law, known as Title IX, was drafted by the late Hawai`i congresswoman Patsy Mink and was eventually renamed in 2002 as the Patsy Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act. Although it originally didn’t specifically address sports, it basically allowed females to start their own sports teams such as soccer, softball, etc. and be given the money equal to that of male sports teams. If no such female teams are available, then Title IX allowed females to go out for male sports. Female students at Kapolei now have opportunities to join bowling, cross country, softball, volleyball, tennis, golf, judo, waterpolo, basketball, paddling, soccer, swimming, and even wrestling teams because of this legislation.

The next law that I chose to focus on was the First Amendment Legislation that limits students’ free speech. Kapolei students will not be allowed to say anything they want, especially if it pertains to school-based activities. For example, Kapolei students are not allowed to put anything they want in the school newspaper or their yearbook. This was illustrated with the Waianae Yearbook controversy, where a group picture featured students holding up a sign that denigrated a specific race. I believe that both the English teacher in the article and the Waianae Yearbook advisor were responsible for reviewing anything that is associated with their position. Students cannot always be trusted to make the appropriate decision, which is why it falls upon us, the educators, to help guide our students on the right path. This is supported by the court case of Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier (1988) where the principal shut down the school newspaper because of something that he/she found inappropriate and the Bong Hits for Jesus case where the principal was allowed to suspend a student for making an inappropriate sign off-campus. This makes sense to me because anything that we are in charge of requires that we pay strict attention to all of the details, and make sure the end product falls within the acceptable standards set for by the Board of Education, our particular school, and also basic ethical standards.

Learning Community Case Study: Teachers
Who are the Teachers and Staff at Kapolei High School?

According to the School Status and Improvement Report for the 2007-2008 year, Kapolei High School had 122 teachers. Almost three-quarters of the teachers were regular instructors while the remaining teachers were mostly special education instructors. Teachers at Kapolei High School, in terms of their teaching experience, are about average. About 40% of the teachers have been at Kapolei for five years or more, which is not surprising since the school opened in 2000. However, the average age of experience is 8.1 years, so those relatively new teachers had some teaching experience before coming to Kapolei. Just over a third of the teachers have advanced degrees and most of them are fully licensed, with about 13% of the teachers needing to complete their licensure. The student to teacher ratio is about 21 to 1 for regular classes and 11 to 1 for special education classes.

At Kapolei High School, there are 8 administrators. The Principal is Elden Esmeralda, who has been at the school for at least the last five years, the Vice Principals are Doris Yamashiro, Hartwell Leee Loy, Jon Henry Lee and Darren Camello, and the School Administrative Services Assistant is Valerie Daoang. There are also 2 librarians and 8 counselors.

I had the opportunity to perform service learning at Kapolei for an education class and I had to check-in at the Administration Office to receive my visitor’s pass. From what I could tell when I was in the office, they sounded as if they were happy and they appreciated the teacher that I was visiting for letting them know ahead of time to expect my arrival. For a public school, Kapolei appears to have a very good academic structure and support system. Kapolei has a unique format that teachers follow, at least when it comes to teaching ninth grade Social Studies and English, because there were teams of teachers who took turns being in charge of a double class of roughly forty students. On one day, the class would focus on Social Studies, and the next day it would focus on English. In some classes, there were a few SPED students grouped with regular needs students. I asked the teacher I was visiting if and how she adapts her lesson plans to meet the needs of the SPED students, and she said that she works with the SPED teacher to adapt some parts of her lessons so that it coincides with the SPED students’ IEP’s. She said it was very important to have a good working relationship with the SPED teacher and to keep a clear line of communication open. I also got the chance to meet two of the school’s librarians. They were very nice and said that the teacher I was visiting is a good teacher, and I would be able to learn from her, which I agree. From the teachers I met during my service learning, the experience of the teachers ranged from 3-5 years, and for all of them, teaching at Kapolei High School was their first teaching job. According to the School Quality Survey, 76% of the teachers were satisfied with Kapolei, and over 80% felt it was a professional work environment.

How have teachers changed over the years, specifically at Kapolei?

Over the years, teachers and teaching methods evolved to meet the multitude of student needs dictated by Federal and State laws, but the basic idea remains the same. Since 3000 BC a teacher works with a group of students to impart...
Teachers in the United States began in New England in the 17th century as a way to teach a few select white males about religious doctrine. These teachers were also white males and approached instruction as a way to maintain the social order and function of privileged groups in the local village or town. As religious doctrine gave way to more secular reading, writing, and math skills, and other school subjects in the 18th and 19th century, teachers remained mostly male and strict. It wasn’t until the mid-19th century, when education was offered to a larger population of white males and females as Common Schools, that gender roles in teaching began to change. Female teachers were seen as more nurturing than males, and despite being paid 1/3 less than their male counterparts, began dominating the profession. At the beginning of the 20th century, public schools were commonplace, and established in all parts of the United States, including the Western United States. Here, teachers were still expected to be task masters and instill a strict sense of discipline of all students and teachers were expected to hold themselves to the highest morals. It wasn’t until the 1950s and 1960s that schools began reflecting the civil rights movement and school was equally accessible for all students regardless of gender or race. However, even to the present, white female teachers remain the majority, making up about 75% of the teaching profession.

According to the School Status and Improvement Report for the 2000-2001 year, Kapolei High School began with 21 teachers, but the ratio of regular teachers to special education teachers was the same as it was in 2008. However, the average experience was over 12 years and about 1/3rd had advanced degree. This means that over the last 7 years, new teachers have been coming to Kapolei High School. The teaching to student ratio also increased slight by one or two students over the years for both regular and special education classes. Interestingly, Kapolei started with most of its administrators (6), and have added only two more since. They also added one more librarian, but added 7 more counselors. Also interesting is that 64% of the teachers rated satisfaction with Kapolei High School, which is about 12% less than in 2008, but rated student safety at 91%. These scores, along with some of the other scores on the Quality School Survey, indicates that students were well supported and safe, but may not have felt supported themselves.

What laws protect the rights of Kapolei teachers and staff?

One law that I focused on is the First Amendment, specifically whether Kapolei High School teachers have the right to speak out against policies that they do not agree with and still keep their job? According to the Touch the Future…Teach text, free speech is allowed for teachers as long as it does not break a law or affect their work in the classroom. The Supreme Court’s decision from Pickering v. Board of Education says that teachers can, as long as it is not detrimental to the operation of the school. Of course, this is Hawaii and there will be backlash by those who do not share similar feelings or ideas, and I would imagine that teachers would not want to come to work every day knowing that their co-workers are against them. So, it seems that on paper, teacher’s right to free speech is protected, but in reality, “boat-rockers” may experience a backlash for speaking out.

The other law that I focused on is on the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendment, and whether teachers at Kapolei
can be fired. I focused on this law because I always wondered why it is so difficult to get bad teachers fired. According to the Hawai‘i State Teacher Association and a teaching friend of mine who works for the DOE, tenure for DOE teachers is currently set for service of 1 year and 1 day. This means that before tenure a teacher can be fired for any reason without the administration showing any “cause” why. After tenure, a teacher can only be fired if the administration can show evidence of “cause” that the teacher is no longer fit to teach. Cause can mean breaking a law or not showing up to work, but cause is much harder to show if the teacher is merely incompetent or has strong opinions regarding an issue. The administration must demonstrate that the bad teacher who has tenure is consistently incompetent by gathering evidence over the course of years, and then also has to give the bad teacher time to get better. Showing cause is so burdensome for the administration that if the bad teacher is not overwhelmingly a problem, then it isn’t worth the effort and resources to fire that person! In addition, Kapolei teachers automatically join the HSTA, whose main function is to protect their rights against no due process and collective bargaining.

Learning Community Case Study: Parents, Guardians, and Families

Who are the Families at Kapolei High School?

After reviewing the Kapolei High School SSIR for 2007-2008, I can see that the Kapolei community is made up of 25,180 individuals with about a quarter of those individuals are between the ages of 5-19 and the median age being 32. Comparing that to the rest of the state, the average family size of 3.8, along with the high percentage of families with children under 18, the Kapolei community can be characterized as a lot of families with young children. This makes sense because of the new construction of homes and businesses that have been created in the last ten years. The Kapolei household also appears to be middle to upper-middle class with the average median household income of $65,561 and 37% of the Kapolei residents have taken some college, however, the number of college graduates is about the same as the state average. The percentage of families with children living in the poverty or needing public assistance income is much lower than the state averages. According to the School Quality Survey, just over half the parents felt that Kapolei was safe for their children, and about 60% were satisfied with the school. This is about the same range of results for the Kapolei students, so parents are agreeing more with the students’ perceptions and less with the teachers. This may indicate a communication and participation disconnect between the teachers and the parents. According to the School Community Council (SCC) Minutes in 2007-2008, which is made up of Kapolei HS staff, community members, parents, and students, some of the issues that the council discussed were academic teaching and financial plans, weighted student formulas, the implementation of a leadership academy, concerns about speeding traffic in front of the school, changes to the DOE calendar, HSA results, car safety, and graduation. This indicates that there seems to be some dialogue occurring between the community and the school, but I could not find indications of whether those discussions translated into any real action.

How have families changed over the years, specifically at Kapolei?
Hawaii is a very family-oriented culture, and it is common to find multi-generational households. The American home has changed over the years, so much that there is now a distinction between a household and a family household. According to the text Touch the Future…Teach, it describes a household as including all of the people who live together in one housing unit, while a family household is described as a social unit of two or more people who live together in a household related by birth, marriage, or adoption. The divorce rate of our nation has been rising at a startling rate over the past few decades, and now there is a 50/50 chance that marriages will end in a divorce. As a nation, we have been moving away from the nuclear family, and now there are many different types of family households out there. In Hawaii and in my own personal experience, it is not uncommon to find households that have both parents employed, and have grandparents and/or other family members living under the same roof.

Unfortunately, because the census is taken every ten years, and the Kapolei High School has only existed for 8 years, there is no data on how the families have changed in the area. However the SSIR for 2001-2002, does indicate that parents felt that the school was safer for their children and they were more satisfied with the school than they are now. It also indicates that parents perceived that there was more involvement with the school than now suggesting that as the school gained students, the ability to feel connected to the school for both students and parents became more difficult to do.

Learning Community Case Study: School

Who is Kapolei High School?

According to the Touch the Future…Teach textbook, mission statements are the guiding force that dictates what all aspects of the learning community of a school need to focus on. At Kapolei High School, its mission is to “create a learning environment to help students meet and exceed ‘The Hawaii Content and Performance Standards’.” That tells me that Kapolei’s number one goal is to prepare its students academically, and so I should find that everything the school learning community does is geared to that goal. In addition to that one mission, Kapolei also wants students to learn to be responsible for their own learning, work well with others, be good thinkers, communicators, and problem solvers, produce quality products, use technology effectively and ethically, and are caring global citizens with integrity. According to the Kapolei High School Strategic Plan (2008-2011), it will achieve its mission by making sure that standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment is in all their classrooms and that teachers are given the support needed to do that. They plan to do this by implementing K2C (Keys to Comprehension)
strategies in the classroom and to require sustained silent reading school-wide. They also plan to implement math and critical-thinking strategies in all content areas by providing teachers with professional developmental opportunities for differentiation instructional strategies, project-based learning, and technology. They plan to demonstrate many of these characteristics of learning through a common assessment of “senior projects” that all students must do to graduate from Kapolei. In addition, Kapolei plans to support the students’ social, emotional, and physical well-being of all students through 9th grade transition courses, the Ho’ola Leadership Academy, SPED and ELL resources, evaluate the effectiveness of parental participation and student school attendance program. Finally, to help teachers, Kapolei plans to provide a half-time teacher mentor to support teachers through classroom observations, modeling, and feedback.

School Culture

All of these strategic plans support Kapolei’s formal school culture of academics, which is what the school formally states what it is going to do for the students. Just as important is the informal school culture, the part that isn’t written down, that is taught to the students. According to the text, Touch the Future…Teach, school culture is characterized as what is being emphasized in its mission statement, what is taught, how people treat each other, and who is involved in the decision making process. At Kapolei High School, the school culture emphasizes that academic performance is most important as determined by the No Child Left Behind standards, and then support of the other areas of the students life are important as well. This school culture is found in their school name, the Hurricanes, and in their school colors, teal, black, and silver because it indicates a school that is a force to be dealt with and that changes are happening at the school. This is found in a line in its alma mater, “Our banner flies through rain, wind, and storms.” The alma mater also demonstrates Kapolei’s other mission to support student’s social development, “Our Aloha you’ll find between the mountains and the sea.” The students that I have met from Kapolei over the years seem to like the school and show school pride, especially at athletic events, but I have also met one or two students who feel that Kapolei has too many cliques, and that if you don’t belong to some of the more popular cliques, then you don’t fit in and aren’t part of the school.

School Programs and Academic Progress (NCLB)

According to the text, Touch the Future…Teach, one the challenges of schools are how to prepare students for higher levels of learning. Based on Kapolei’s website, it prepares its students for the next phase of their lives by offering problem-based learning opportunities in all their regular education classes that progressively get more difficult as the students move through the grade levels. This problem-based learning culminates in the “senior project” that is graded by a committee of school staff and community members. While Kapolei offers the usual courses needed for high school graduation, 4 years of English and Social Studies, and 3 years of Math and Science, they also offer opportunities for students to join different academies based on their personal interests, for example, business academy, creative media academy, health careers academy, human services academy, to help students prepare for a specific type of career. I did not find any evidence that Advanced Placement courses were offered at Kapolei. Looking over the course calendar, I did find quite a few events that emphasized career choices, such as UH Nursing speakers, Military placement exam, parent collaboration events. scholarship and college information speakers. I also found that Kapolei appears to be filled to capacity because it was nine classrooms short in 2008. However, adequacy of space data indicated that classroom space is still within adequate range, but the biggest challenge is administrative space. One major planned projects occurring at Kapolei is the addition of three SPED trailers at a cost of 1 million dollars to help alleviate the lack of space.
According to the school facilities inspection results, everything scores in the “well” category except the interior of the buildings which were rated as satisfactory.

NCLB Results
According to the DOE website, Kapolei received its first accreditation in 2003 by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), which is good until 2012, where they will be up for review. This means that Kapolei’s programs and approach to instruction and support was found at satisfactorily levels according to the standards set by the WASC governing body. This governing body is responsible for the standards of all schools and colleges in the Western part of the United States. According to the School Accountability report (2007-2008) on the DOE website, Kapolei is in Restructuring. This means that they have not met some of the targets required by No Child Left Behind for several years and this means that students can leave the school if they want to and they are also eligible for educational services like tutoring. While the school was proficient in reading with 77% of the students passing (NCLB target = 58%), the school only had 34% of the students in Math pass (NCLB target = 46%). However, it is important to note that the school improved its math proficiency, compared to the previous year, by 7%. The school also improved in how many teachers were fully licensed to teach by about 3%.

How have schools changed over the years, specifically at Kapolei?
According to the text, Touch the Future... Teach, Schools in the United States began as one-room school houses that served to education privileged white males with religious instruction. Eventually, laws were passed that required local towns to set-up schools and pay for them through taxes, but these schools still served privileged white males. It wasn’t until the mid-1800s that the concept of schools to serve the general public (white males and females) were considered and established to help educate the country’s masses. The first public school in Hawai‘i was Lahainaluna School on Maui, which served to teach Native Hawaiian students basic reading and writing skills, with the idea that they would become teachers themselves eventually. Most of the public schools in Hawai‘i did not offer instruction past the 8th grade, until about 100 years ago when Honolulu High School and McKinley Schools were formed. These schools allowed local students to graduate at a high school level. Private schools, such as Punahou, had always offered high school level training since its inception, but only to select privileged students. Schools in the United States did not truly become integrated, with curriculum for all students, until the 1950s and 1960s, where civil rights legislation was passed guaranteeing every students’ right to attend any public school, regardless of race. Because Kapolei is relatively new, it has undergone very little change. Looking at NCLB test results in 2002, the school still performed well in reading proficiency levels, but struggled in Math. This trend has not changed over the years.

How are Kapolei’s school finances and who controls Kapolei High School?
According to the Trend Report, Education and Fiscal Accountability Report, Kapolei had a budget of 1.6 million dollars, and spent all of it except for about $13,000. This does not include the amount of money spent on paying the salary of its employees which was 9.2 million dollars. Reviewing the Financial Summary document of the school, the breakdown of the 1.6 million dollar school budget revealed that a majority of
the money goes to student support services and programs, such as clubs and athletics. The overall control of the school starts with the taxpayer whose federal and state taxes pay for both the money needed to run the No Child Left Behind at the federal level, but also the state taxes needed to build and maintain the schools in Hawai`i. The amount of tax money used (or how much money schools actually get) is decided by the state legislators. The federal government is not usually involved in how state’s run their educational system, but became involved after passing the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001. The idea here is that if a school in Hawai`i passes or does not pass NCLB standards, and then money is either added or taken away based on those results. Since Kapolei High School is going through restructuring, the state of Hawai`i should expect to receive federal money to help pay for tutoring and teacher development programs to help with its progress. So, after the state legislators decide how much money to give to schools, then the superintendent of schools, Pat Hanamoto, manages the money for the entire DOE school system. However, Pat Hanamoto is hired by the Board of Education, who also sets the general school policies for the DOE system. Pat Hanamoto then passes the money down to the different complexes that make up Hawai`i schools, where each complex has one high school, to the different complex superintendents. In Campbell-Kapolei complex, the superintendent is Vernon Young. Then Vernon oversees the different principals in the complex and provides them with a set budget, specifically Kapolei’s principal, Elden Esmeralda who runs the school’s budget and oversees all of the school’s employees. To help Elden carry out his duties are vice-principals, who are usually designated in a discipline area, support services, and/or academic programs. At Kapolei, there are three vice-principals for each grade level, 11th-12th Grade Hartwell Lee Loy, 10th Grade John Henry Lee and 9th Grade Doris Yamashiro. Finally, the school monies go to different grade levels or departmental budgets where a regular teacher has been elevated to be in charge of that position. These “chairs” have the power to dictate the budget to the teachers in their department and because they work closely with the teachers have the power to evaluate their effectiveness as a teacher, which can result in the firing of a teacher.