



This report covers public education in kindergarten through 12th grade. Its data came from 248 public schools in seven school districts and cover School Year 1997-98. Although the state's public schools can be loosely classified as elementary, intermediate, or high schools, the ranges of grades in schools vary considerably. The school patterns of grade level organization during the 1997-98 school year are shown in **Figure 1**.

School Organization

Figure 1. Grade Level Organization of Public Schools in Hawai'i, 1997-98

GRADE LEVELS INCLUDED													
K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
38 schools, median size: 576 pupils						17 schools, median size: 813 pupils			28 schools, median size: 1,764 pupils				
Linapuni School, 262 pupils								13 schools, median size: 1,008 pupils					
						Kohala High & Intermediate School, 612 pupils							
126 schools, median size: 586 pupils							8 schools, median size: 1,015 pupils						
8 schools, median size: 596 pupils													
Pa'auilo Elementary & Intermediate School, 246 pupils													
7 schools, median size: 305 pupils													

The "standard" school organization of elementary, middle, and high schools primarily exists in urban areas. Multi-level schools (K-8, 7-12, and K-12) serve rural areas or specialized populations.

Generally, schools that have wider grade ranges (K-8, K-12, or 7-12) serve rural areas. The exception is Kula Kaiapuni 'O Anuenue, the Hawaiian Immersion School in Honolulu. The prevailing pattern of school organization in urban areas has three levels: elementary schools with grades K-5 or K-6, intermediate or middle schools with grades 6-8 or 7-8, and high schools with grades 9-12. In addition to the "regular" schools, there are three special program centers that are not organized by grades. Student information for the special centers is included in the data reported below; but some data, such as test scores, are not appropriate for these units and are not included in this report.²

Public school enrollment in Hawai'i—shown in **Figure 2** (next page)—which had been growing at rates in excess of 1.5% for the five years between 1991-92 and 1995-96, declined sharply in the last two years to less than 0.5% growth in 1997-98. Elementary school enrollment, which had been increasing throughout the 1990s, slowed its rate of increase in 1996-97 and virtually stopped increasing in 1997-98. Secondary school enrollment, which had apparently "bottomed out" in 1990 and had been increasing since, also slowed its rate of increase markedly in 1997-98.

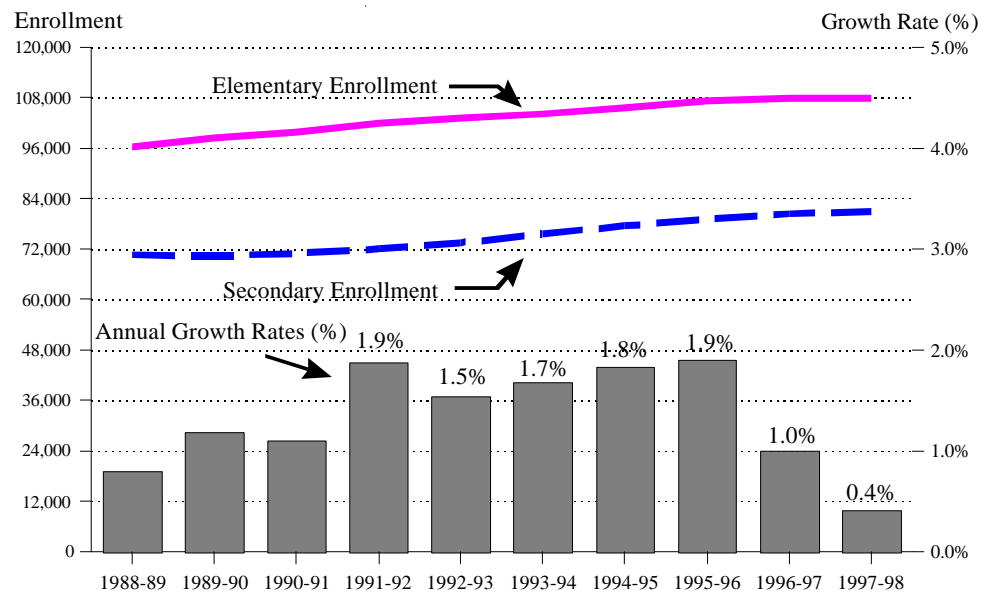
Students Enrollment

Grade-by-grade enrollment data indicate that the current peak enrollment was in second grade in 1997-98. The number of births in Hawai'i (**Appendix B, Table 8**) increased steadily until 1991 and then began to decline. This decline in births has already been reflected in early grade enrollment, and should be reflected in overall enrollment soon.



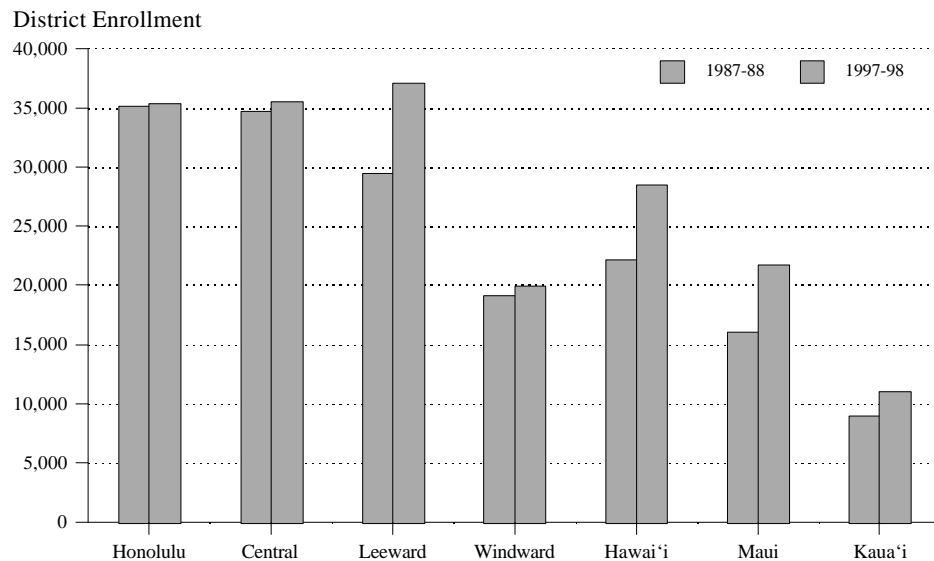
Figure 2. Public School Enrollment in Hawai'i, 1988-89 to 1997-98

Growth in overall enrollment has all but ceased as elementary enrollment leveled off and secondary enrollment growth slowed.



Aside from past growth in overall enrollment, there has been a marked shifting in the geographical distribution of the state's student population. Enrollment changes in the seven districts over the last decade are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Enrollment in 1987-88 and 1997-98, by District



While Honolulu District has grown by less than 250 students since 1987-88, Leeward District's enrollment has increased by over 7,900 students, Hawai'i District's by over 6,700, and Maui District's by almost 6,300. This means that the need for facilities has

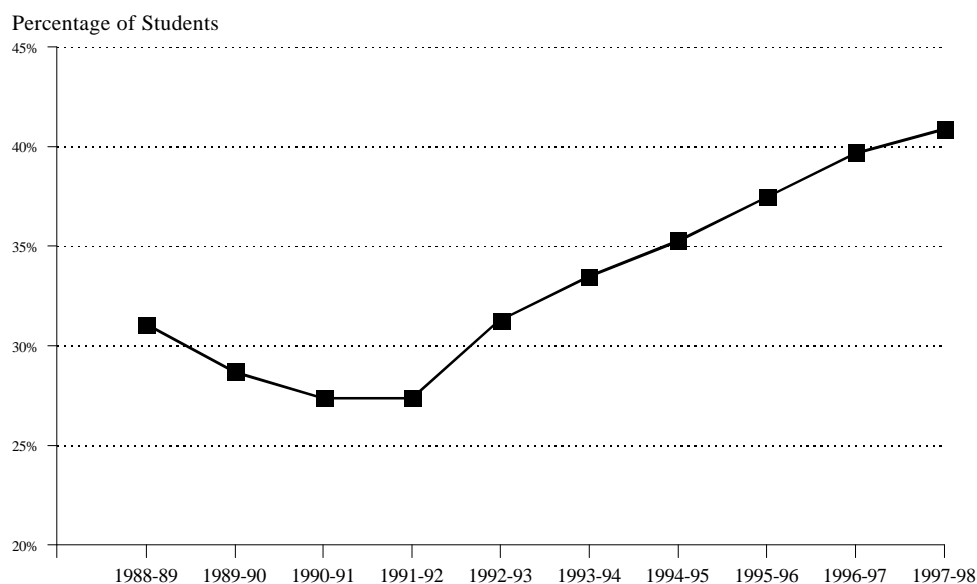


been greater than indicated by overall enrollment alone. We cannot accommodate students enrolling for school in Leeward Oahu with the excess classrooms available in East Honolulu. We have experienced local overcrowding of facilities as a result of population shifts, and these strain our efforts to provide at least adequate facilities for all students.

There are three student subpopulations that are of special concern. These are students from disadvantaged economic circumstances (those who receive school lunch subsidies), students with limited English proficiency, and students who need special education services. Growth in the percentage of students in Hawai'i receiving lunch subsidies over the last eight years is presented in **Figure 4**.

Special Needs

Figure 4. Students Receiving Lunch Subsidies, 1988-89 to 1997-98



The percentage of students receiving lunch subsidies is nearly 1½ times what it was in 1991-92.

The numbers of students needing special education services and the numbers of students with limited English proficiency are shown in **Figure 5** (next page).

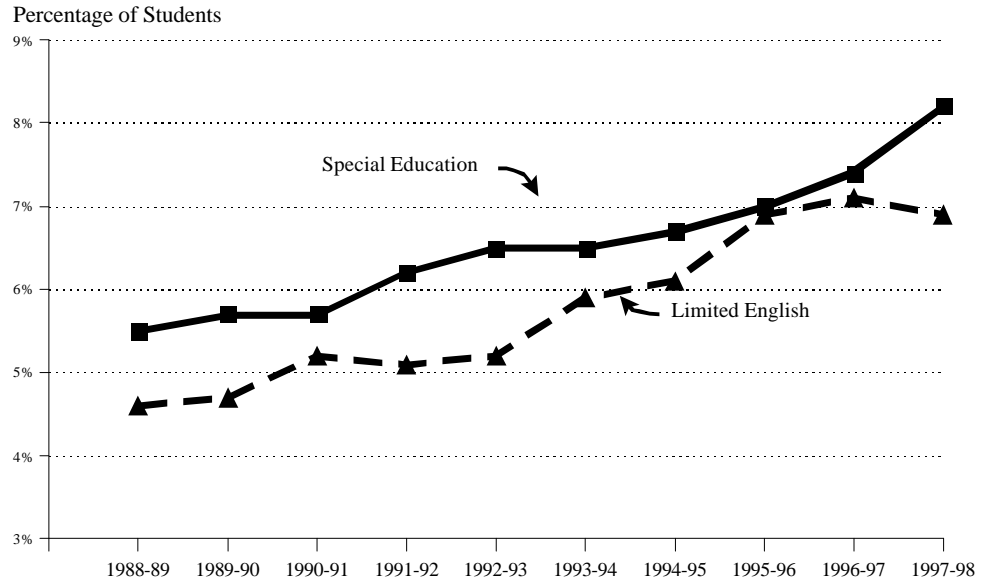
It is readily apparent from **Figures 4 and 5** that all three groups of children with special needs are rapidly growing. The extent of that growth has major implications for public education. Since the 1988-89 school year, overall enrollment increased by 13.2 percent while:

- The number of students who receive lunch subsidies has increased by over 48 percent;
- The number of students needing special education services has increased by almost 70 percent; and
- The number of students who have limited English proficiency has increased by over 70 percent.



Figure 5. Special Education and Limited English Students

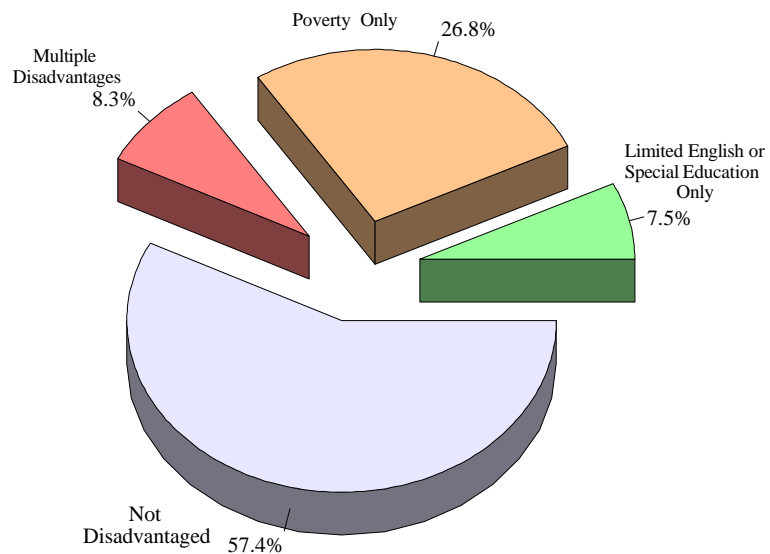
The percentage of special education students has been rapidly increasing throughout the last decade. That of students with limited English has just recently reached a plateau.



Put simply, the numbers of students most in need of special services are increasing much more rapidly than is the population of students at large. This means that the task facing the public schools is steadily becoming more difficult and more costly. Students in each of these categories of special need represent an educational task and responsibility that is more demanding than that of educating a typical English-speaking, middle-class child of average intellect and ambition. Children from impoverished families tend to start school already behind their peers in academic development. The seriousness of the increasing prevalence of disadvantage among the state's public school students is clear from Figure 6.

Figure 6. Disadvantages Affecting Public School Students in Hawai'i

Children with some element of disadvantage now constitute over 40% of all students. This makes the task of providing all students a "free, appropriate education" more difficult and more costly.

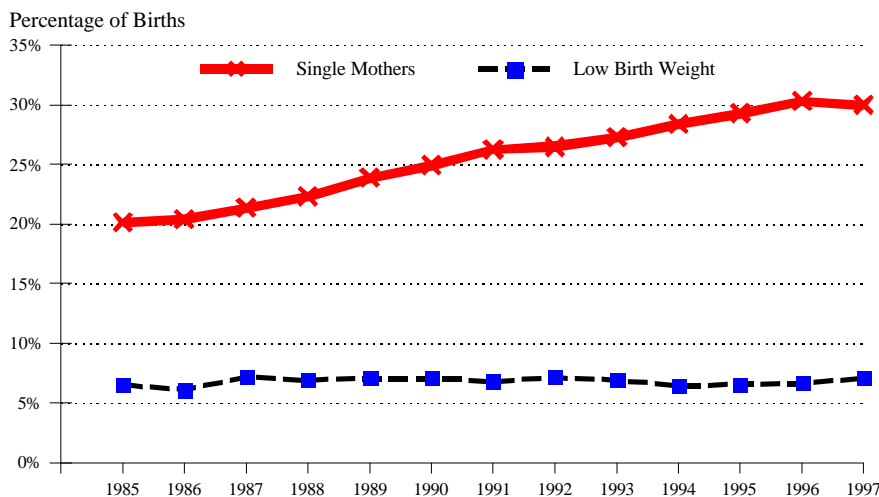




Less than 60% of public school students in Hawai'i do not bring with them at least one of these types of educational disadvantage. The growth in the numbers of disadvantaged students in the state's school population presents a particular challenge to the state's schools in view of the rising expectations that the public has for what schools can achieve and the state's continuing fiscal problems. Disadvantaged students require services that are more costly than the norm, and in many cases these students are "entitled" to whatever services are required to meet their specific needs. It will be challenging indeed to meet the needs of the state's students, both advantaged and disadvantaged, with the increasingly restricted funding that Hawai'i has and is willing to devote to public education.

Two vital statistics that are likely predictors of special needs among school-aged children are the incidence of low birth weight—under 2,500 grams (5.5 lb.)—and births to single mothers. The incidence of low birth weight is associated with a number of health and developmental problems in young children, while births to single mothers reflect weak family structure and a likelihood that the children will grow up poor. Data on these two indicators are presented in **Figure 7**. Over the period for which data are available, the proportion of children with low birth weight has been steady and small, about 7%. By contrast, over the same period there have been steadily growing numbers and proportions of children born to single mothers. The 1996 rate of births to single mothers in Hawai'i (30.3%) was over three times what it was in 1970 (9.6%).³ There is a slight drop in this statistic for 1997, but it remains to be seen whether this will signal a genuine downturn in this data or merely a pause in the otherwise upward trend (as in 1992).

Figure 7. Incidence of Low Birth Weight and Births to Single Mothers



Births to single mothers have increased over the last three decades to amount to at least 30% of all births in Hawai'i.

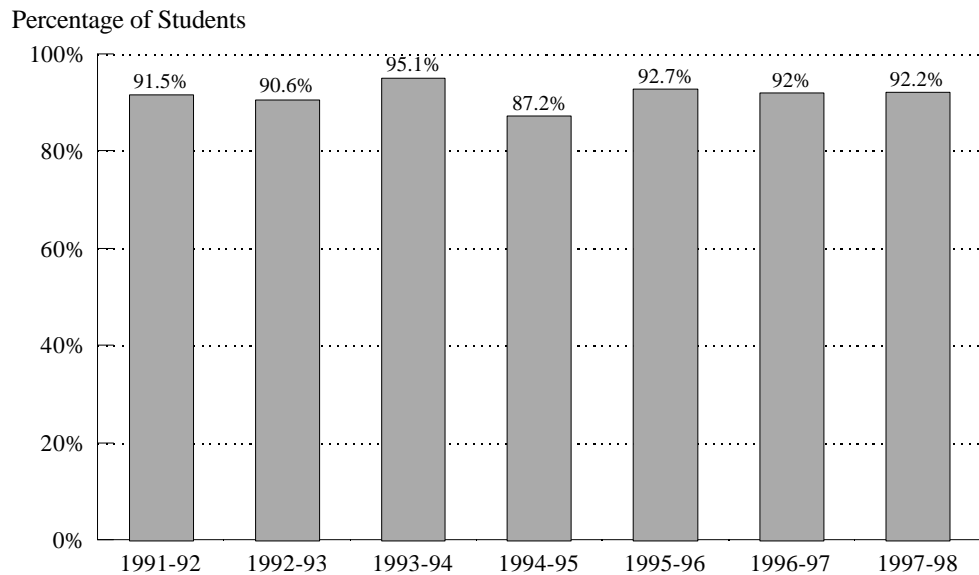
Public school students in Hawai'i are not exceptionally mobile, so far as we can tell. Although we do not have comparison data from other states, we do have estimates of the proportion of the state's students who were enrolled in the same school for the entire year.⁴ This measure captures short term transiency, that which occurs within the school year. It does not capture transiency over a longer term, that is where

Student Transiency



students change schools between school years without completing the entire curriculum at one school. The proportions staying in the same school all year for the last seven school years are shown in **Figure 8**. In 1997-98, the percentages of students enrolled for the entire year in regular schools ranged from 69% to over 99%. There was little variation among types of schools in the proportions of year-round students; statewide averages for elementary, intermediate, multi-grade and high schools were all between 91% and 94%. The most significant factor influencing students' transiency is the demanding lifestyle of military parents; 9 of the 12 schools with less than 80% of their students enrolled year-round were schools serving military housing areas.⁵ The exceptions were Olomana School, at which students are expected to be transient, and Ni'ihau and Ke'anae Schools, which between them only enrolled 20 students. Altogether, 92% of the state's students were enrolled in the same school all year.

Figure 8. Students Enrolled in the Same School All Year



Most schools have over 90% of their students enrolled for the entire school year. Almost all the schools with less than 80% of their students enrolled for the entire year serve military housing areas.