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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**NATIONAL REPORT HIGHLIGHTS HAWAII'S USE OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOLS**

**Classroom observations are being used to help Hawai'i's youngest students**

HONOLULU – In early childhood through third grade classrooms throughout Hawai'i, teachers are being watched to see how they interact with their students. Studies have consistently found that children's academic achievement and social skills development improve greatly with effective teacher-student interactions, and students who succeed in their early years are more likely to continue to do well throughout the remainder of their years in school.

In a recent study published by the New America Foundation, Hawai'i was highlighted as one of a handful of states using the innovative Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Facilitated by Hawai'i P-20 Partnerships for Education's early childhood arm, the Hawai'i P-3 Initiative, CLASS is a high-level observation tool that provides educators with the feedback and support that allows them to improve their interactions with students, leading to greater academic achievement and social development for Hawai'i's keiki.

The New America Foundation report, "Watching Teachers Work: Using Observation Tools to Promote Effective Teaching in the Early Years and Early Grades," cites the work being done in Hawai'i and quotes Kim Guieb-Kang of the Hawai'i P-3 Initiative who speaks to the importance of making sure that teachers and principals are trained in how the observation tools work before assessments are made. A Hawai'i program called "Tutu and Me" that provides insight on how formal evaluations can improve learning environment for very young children in family-based settings, is also recognized in the report.

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CLASS is being used to observe teachers in programs and classrooms that serve over 23,000 children in Hawai‘i school districts with the highest percentage of students that qualify for federal lunch assistance.

“The CLASS observation tool is very powerful, with far-reaching implications. Improving teacher interactions and student learning through classroom observations in early learning programs helps children prepare for elementary school, and once they are in school, a highly effective learning environment will help them to succeed beyond their formative years,” says Karen C. Lee, executive director of Hawai‘i P-20 Partnerships for Education. “Hawai‘i P-20’s goal is for 55 percent of Hawai‘i’s residents to have earned a two- or four-year college degree by 2025. Students of ages 0 – 8 need to have the building blocks of education that will help them be prepared for college and the workforce.”

CLASS is designed to measure interactions within three domains (emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support) along multiple dimensions, including quality of feedback and concept development, among others, that characterize children’s classroom experiences in Pre-K to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Scores range from 1-7. A score of 1 under the “quality of feedback” dimension reflects a teacher’s inability to provide anything more than perfunctory responses to children’s questions about something they are doing in class. A score of 7 means that a teacher is often helping children to reach new levels of understanding by engaging in frequent back-and-forth exchanges that genuinely address a child’s questions and curiosity.

A second grade teacher at Waihole Elementary School says, “This was one of the best courses I have taken in my professional career thus far. CLASS wasn’t about one particular strategy, or some new curriculum that I had to struggle to incorporate on top of everything else I’m already expected to do; instead, this was a new way to look at myself and the way I conduct my class – it could be used in any subject, at any time, throughout the day. CLASS has dramatically affected the way I teach and plan.”

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Hawai’i P-3 facilitates the alignment of early childhood education programs and elementary schools in five demonstration projects serving 11 early childhood programs and 49 elementary schools in Hawai’i. Funding is provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Harold K.L. Castle Foundation, Samuel N. & Mary Castle Foundation and Kamehameha Schools.

**ABOUT HAWAI’I P-20**

Hawai’i P-20 Partnerships for Education is a statewide partnership led by the Early Learning Council, the Hawai’i State Department of Education, and the University of Hawai’i System, with the goal of improving educational outcomes for Hawai’i. Hawai’i P-20 works to strengthen the pipeline so all students, from early childhood through higher education, achieve college and career success. For more information, visit [www.p20hawaii.org](http://www.p20hawaii.org)

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