

# Ka Lau

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## Why it is the way it is...

And now for a bit about funding. Stop yawning! Director Okoye wants parents to better understand the fiscal challenges that LCPCS faces, in order to better appreciate our school's many recent achievements.

Most of LCPCS's funding comes through what is called a "per pupil allocation." Basically, the Hawaii DOE, as part of its budget process each year, identifies a sum of money destined for all charter schools in the state. (In a complex process, the DOE's budget proposal is approved each year by the BOE, the Governor and the Legislature.) The per pupil allocation is that sum of money divided between charter schools based on how many students each school has. In other words, DOE doesn't define the per pupil amount. The per pupil amount is determined by dividing the amount of money DOE sets aside for charter schools by how many charter school students there are. It's a subtle but important difference. Historically, the per pupil funding for charter school students has been considerably lower than that for students at DOE schools, and in the last few years, the percentage has dropped even further.



*Did you know that the characteristic cobble in our school's concrete is the result of an error by the architect? For more info, go to [lcpcs.org](http://lcpcs.org), and click on the "About Us" and then the "Our Campus and Facilities" tabs.*

Weirdly, while charter schools get so much less funding, they have to pay for many things that DOE schools don't, like electricity, water, gas, phones and yard maintenance. Because LCPCS is a regional school (one of two on Hawai'i Island, the other being Waimea Middle School), we don't have to pay rent on the facilities, or major renovation costs like the school upgrade coming this spring. However, the per pupil funding goes almost entirely to keeping the school doors open. The funding for programs that we all value so highly, like art, music, and after school activities, has to come from grants.

"We do have to prioritize a lot," says Business Manager Gerry Delgado. "It's hard to say we're not going to budget a program that people like, but being able to say 'no' is crucial." The good news is that, with rising enrollment, the amount of grant money coming in, and some careful number-crunching, the school's fiscal

situation is improving. "We're adding programs again," says Mr. Delgado.

"Gerry and the administration have done an excellent job in prioritizing our school's needs given our budgetary constraints," says Governing Board member Thomas Bearden, chair of the Finance Committee. "They provide the Governing Board with clear financial statements and conservative budget projections that are allowing us to plan ahead in a realistic and positive manner."

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## Calendar

- Tuesday, March 15 — 4th grade to Pu`ukoholā Heiau
- Tuesday, March 15 — Small group to poi pounding workshop at Kea`au Middle School with Mr. Otake
- Tuesday, March 15, 5:30 to 7:15 pm — `Ohana Read Aloud , LCPCS cafeteria
- Wednesday, March 16 — 6th grade to Mele Murals, Hilo
- Thursday, March 17 — Pajama Day for elementary students in celebration of National Reading Month
- Thursday, March 17, 8:30 to 11:30 am — Laupāhoehoe Point Service Day
- Friday, March 18 through Friday, March 25 — SPRING BREAK
- Monday, March 28 — Kuhio Day. NO SCHOOL
- Tuesday, March 29 — Classes begin again

## The way it is... *Continued from page 1*

So what's the advantage in being a charter school when the funding system appears to be so unfair? Besides having a local governing board that is immediately responsive to our school's needs, besides the power to be far more creative and flexible, and besides the ability to receive grant money that stays right in the school, Mr. Bearden had an interesting point. "The advantage to being underfunded is that it gives us an incentive to provide a quality education in order to attract more students," he said recently. The DOE schools "don't have the same incentive for excellence that we have because they are going to get funded regardless of the quality of the product." While LCPCS is currently not able to fund everything it would like, it's doing well with the funding it has, as both steadily increasing enrollment rates and rising test scores show.

"We receive less funding now than when we were a DOE school. That is a fact everyone should know. But we are using the flexibility and grant funding we have as a charter school to the best possible advantage, and because of the hard work of the entire LCPCS `ohana, we are growing and improving," adds LCPCS Director Michael Okoye.

## Seasider Spotlight



Garry Delgado

Born in Mexico and brought up in southern California, LCPCS Business Manager Gerry Delgado spoke Spanish throughout most of his childhood. His father was an accountant, and while Mr. Delgado tried some other things, happily for LCPCS he "ended up in accounting too." He spent three and a half years working in Brooklyn, which is where he met his wife through mutual friends while she was vacationing in the Big Apple. She is Lanie Nacis, a 1997 LHES graduate, and life-time Laupāhoehoe resident. They courted long distance, and were married shortly after he came to Hawai'i in 2007. The couple has a son, Josiah, in the first grade.

Mr. Delgado can answer pretty much any question about LCPCS that's worth asking, and he has been known to respond to a business-related email at 9:30 at night. Why such dedication? Mr. Delgado says he really appreciates the opportunity to see the students grow, and help them become responsible adults. (And as a bonus, he enjoys speaking Spanish with some of the language students.) Mahalo, Mr. Delgado.