

To: The Board of Education
From: Maralyn Kurshals
Re: REPORT ON COMMITTEES

June 7, 2011

My name is Maralyn Kurshals. I had the privilege of serving on the BOE from December 2010 to April 2011 as the Leeward representative.

The majority of my career has been in human services in the nonprofit sector and as many of you may be experiencing, the learning curve of being on the BOE is very fast and steep, especially for those who do not have an educational background, like myself.

However, I am here this afternoon, taking time off work to be with you because I feel there is a very important issue that needs to be addressed immediately. This has to do with accessibility to meetings and an open public testimony agenda item. I found that one of the most useful and informative experiences I had as a new BOE member occurred when we:

- 1) Held our meetings at schools
- 2) Listened to open community concerns at the general meetings
- 3) Listened to presentations by the Hawaii State Student Council

It appears that the meeting structure of this new BOE does not allow for accessible times for the community or for the student representatives to be present without missing a full school day. In addition, there does not appear to be an agenda item to allow the HSSC to present their valuable information or an open forum for general public testimony (not specific to the agenda items). This limited public testimony focus will not allow the BOE to truly hear the voice of the community and educators.

In my term on the BOE, without the invaluable input from the community, we never would have been aware of the serious issues surrounding the testing tool being used for the Hawaiian Immersion schools. We also would not have been able to support the tremendously intelligent student directed resolutions presented by HSSC.

We know that the public school system will only be successful if ALL of us are involved. That includes families, parents, educators, community members, and of course the students themselves, the consumers of education. The current meeting times are accessible and prohibit most people from attending. By not having meetings at schools, the BOE is no longer experiencing direct contact with each unique school district and missing out on valuable knowledge and engagement.

I encourage you to please change the times back to the evenings (6pm) for community involvement and to begin at 3pm rather than 9:30am to allow the student to not miss school. And finally, please have some meetings at the schools themselves so they can highlight all the wonderful programs and hard working staff that deserve to be acknowledged. If not, you are missing some of the most important aspects of being on the BOE, because it is all about the CHILDREN AND PEOPLE, not merely effective meetings and schedules. Thank you.