



STATE OF HAWAII'
BOARD OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

March 15, 2016

TO: Lance Mizumoto
Chairperson, Board of Education

FROM: Grant Chun, Patricia Halagao, Amy Asselbaye
Members, Board of Education

AGENDA ITEM: Report on March 8, 2016 Maui Community Meeting

On March 8, 2016 the Board of Education held a community meeting in Maui County. The meeting was held at the Maui High School Library (located at 660 South Lono Avenue, Kahului, Maui) from 5:30-7:30 p.m. The meeting was attended by Board Members Grant Chun, Patricia Halagao, and Amy Asselbaye. There were approximately 38 attendees, which included Department of Education staff, teachers, administrators, and community members. The meeting was agendized for the purpose of sharing views on public education and discussing the community's role in supporting student achievement and the public library system, with a focus on serving linguistically and culturally diverse students.

The meeting included a presentation by Board Member Halagao on the Board's new policies, Multilingualism for Equitable Education and the Seal of Biliteracy. Melissa Perez, Baldwin-Kekaulike-Maui Complex Area ("BKM Complex Area") ELL Resource Teacher and Ginifer Nania-Cole, BKM Complex Area ELL/Literacy Resource Teacher provided an update on Maui District English language learners. Board Members and Department staff fielded questions and received input, including questions regarding the implementation of the policies. The Board received good input from educators who shared their experiences and challenges in working with this group of students. Of note was a common theme amongst the teachers that this recognition and validation of a student's culture and home language supports improved performance and achievement in the classroom.

After the presentations and question and answer session, attendees broke up into three small groups, each facilitated by a Board Member.

In Board Member Patricia Halagao's group, the topics covered included value and implementation of the multilingualism policy, discussion on what English learner

services currently exist in schools, the importance of School Community Councils (“SCC”) and the need for consistency of involvement of SCCs in all schools.

In Board Member Grant Chun’s group, good information concerning staffing challenges on the neighbor islands was shared. Specifically, it is extremely difficult for schools to hire and bring in translators on a casual or intermittent basis. Personnel procedures make it burdensome and onerous for qualified translators to stay in the pool available to the Department, with repeated calls for things like reapplication and finger-printing, as though they had never done work for the Department in the first place. Points were also made concerning student identification badges which are no longer issued by the State, but by the schools themselves. The point was made that enforcement for students to have identifications on their persons should be more stringent and uniform. An administrator in the group disagreed.

In Board Member Amy Asselbayer’s group, there was a robust discussion about services for special education students on Maui and teachers discussed their interest in getting rid of the Smarter Balanced assessment and standardized testing. She was also provided with an article (attached to this memorandum) regarding the reprioritization of public schools.

Following the small groups, Board Members and attendees gathered informally to meet and mingle.

Plea made to Board of Education to reprioritize the public schools

When the first appointed Board of Education was seated in 2011 after passage of the ballot amendment abolishing elected boards, it was announced that the public school system would be run under a business model. To do so would suggest that as with most businesses, success would equate with economic viability.



VIEWPOINT
ALAN
ISBELL

Just prior in 2010 came Race to the Top, a four-year grant for \$75 million in federal dollars as long as districts that accepted the money agreed to the conditions of the failed policies of then-Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Among those conditions were tying school and teacher evaluations to standardized test scores, a concept that since has been roundly and variously deemed unreliable.

What a deal! Infusion of millions in federal aid into the new business model. With this "New Beginning," the state of Hawaii could dramatically increase the number of college-ready high school graduate prod-

ucts, while at the same time ridding itself of underachieving employees. Now, that's a business model. But has it really worked?

If one overlooks the dubious notion that public school students can be viewed as "products," has the rate of college-ready high school seniors really risen significantly? The graduation rate actually dropped last year. Has the number of bad teachers identified really warranted the expense in developing and administering the Educator Effectiveness System? Education Week reported "just 2.1 percent needed improvement and only 0.2 percent were ineffective."

Meanwhile, the \$75 million received from the federal government for Race to the Top paled in comparison to the costs of complying with the requirements of the program. If the DOE is to be truly transparent, an accounting of the total spent to comply with this program is warranted to be able to objectively determine whether EES and its ancillary components are indeed cost-effective.

It is foolhardy to continue with business as usual, because the DOE simply cannot be operated under a business model. The result has been the expense of untold millions on what can be qualified as political- and bureaucratic motivated programs.

Think of what could have been done with those funds if truly directed to school-level improvements.

With the exit of Duncan and introduction of the newly revised Elementary and Secondary Education Act, teacher and school evaluations need not be tied to standardized testing, although under ESEA, the testing itself is to continue in some form. Hawaii public schools would be well-served to immediately disconnect school and teacher evaluations from standardized testing and to minimize the testing, the scores of which have been targeted as unreliable and biased developmentally, geographically, culturally and racially.

Who in education would argue that test scores predominantly favor students from the best socioeconomic circumstances? Yet we are to deliver a quality public education to every child.

Business as usual in this case is clearly not good business. It does not compute. Reprioritize the DOE, and cease trying to push a square block through a round hole.

■ Alan Isbell is a 4th-grade teacher at Wailuku Elementary School and the school's head faculty representative for the Hawaii State Teachers Association.