

TESTIMONY for Hawaii State Board of Education, Human Resources Committee meeting  
Tues. June 21, 2016, 9:30 am

AGENDA ITEM: Update on process for evaluation of superintendent

Honorable Chair DeLima and BOE Human Resources Committee:

My name is Mireille Ellsworth, an English and Drama teacher at Waiakea High School in Hilo on the Big Island. I saw your agenda over the weekend, and since I network with teachers from all over the state and the country, I asked for ideas as to what would be the best criteria, from classroom teachers' points of view, to evaluate a superintendent. I received an overwhelming response and have consolidated the ideas received into the following list for your consideration:

- Has a minimum of 10 years of classroom teaching experience in a public school (not a charter school) with references from colleagues (peer teachers, not administrators), support staff, former students, and former parents of students showing this person was a good teacher.

-OR-

- Has enough years in the classroom to know what students are like, what the dynamics of a classroom are (its day-to-day ebb and flow as it reacts to the overall school atmosphere, the mood of the kids, community tragedies, etc.), the daily challenges of a school building (what happens when we're down teachers and on subs in sight, what happens when we hire lazy security, what happens when the BIG Game is tonight, what happens when a kid loses a parent in a drunken brawl or by a drunken driver, and so many, many other things).
- Has been a resident of Hawaii for at least 10 years.
- Is an active member of the greater community.
- Understands importance of place and culture in decision-making and in interactions with individuals and the public. -or- Demonstrates cultural awareness and sensitivity in decision-making and human interactions.
- Demonstrates knowledge of the unique similarities and differences of all Hawaiian islands.
- Promotes and is sensitive to island cultures and traditions.
- Maintains a positive and respectful rapport with the faculty of each school.
- Models respect and decorum at all times.
- Has a positive track record of supporting teachers.
- Creates a culture of solidarity and togetherness, rather than competition.
- Demonstrates an understanding that respect comes along with the idea of teamwork and shared responsibility, not accountability.
- Demonstrates the skills, capacity, and the will to build or create a culture of fairness, solidarity, and collaboration.
- Acts with compassion, knowledge and commitment, respect for students, staff, and the local community.
- Uses more than one communication method to share ideas, policy, etc.
- Demonstrates ability to communicate with people from the bottom up vs. top down.

- Establishes a safe and welcoming learning environment for all stakeholders.
- Provides proof that his or her training and experience are not influenced by corporate interests.
- Demonstrates promotion of academic freedom and maximizing teacher talent.
- Consistently demonstrates knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced in the classroom by public school teachers.
- Demonstrates connection to the classroom:  
(track number of hours spent observing classroom instruction, number of hours meeting with and engaging in dialogue with parent groups, number of hours meeting with and engaging in dialogue with parents of students with special needs, number of hours meeting with and engaging in dialogue with parents of students who have limited English proficiency (may need to hire interpreters))
- Provides evidence that past executive decisions reflect the best interests of students.
- Works to include the faculty in all building decisions affecting the classroom.
- Demonstrates building a culture of solidarity and collaboration among all.
- Sets up means by which to evaluate innovations and willing to abandon plans that are clearly not working based on input from those implementing plans.
- Oversees and plans for a budget that meets immediate as well as future needs.
- Understands and accepts responsibility for meeting with the Governor and legislature to educate them on educational issues as well as procure funding for students.
- Makes calendar public.
- Understands and keeps informed regarding all aspects of the instructional program personally.
- Has a knowledgeable staff that provides accurate information and direction but keeps informed by talking to people "in the field" as well.
- Has a plan for minimizing student loan debt for Hawaii public school graduates.
- Provides a plan for eliminating workplace bullying.
- Has a positive track record of relationships with unions. -OR- Past experience demonstrates constructive, collaborative relationships with bargaining units.

Important questions to ask upon hiring:

- If you have already served as a superintendent or assistant/vice superintendent, under what circumstances did you leave that position and would that district hire you again?
- Have you ever been bought out of a contract? And if so, why?
- How much does he/she feel is fair compensation for a superintendent, a principal, a teacher, and, if the superintendent's pay is higher than the teachers' or principals', why?
- Complete this sentence: "If we don't respect and support our \_\_\_\_\_, then I will not have a job."

Thank you for your consideration,

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