



**S E A C**  
**Special Education Advisory Council**

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February 21, 2017

**Special Education  
Advisory Council**

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Brian De Lima, Chair  
Human Resources Committee  
Hawaii State Board of Education  
P. O. Box 2360  
Honolulu, HI 96804

RE: IV. A. Presentation on Every Student Succeeds Act Impacts on  
Teacher Content Qualifications

Dear Chair De Lima and Members of the Committee,

The Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) is very interested in the discussion around certification requirements for special educators under ESSA, and we appreciate the invitation by Assistant Superintendent Krieg to provide input.


As you know, students with disabilities (SWD) have less access to a qualified teacher, let alone someone who has demonstrated competency in the subject area content, than their non-disabled peers (economically disadvantaged or not). This is due not only to teacher vacancies and non-certified personnel teaching students with complex needs, but also to the reality that only 1/3 of students with disabilities receive 80% or more of their instruction in the curriculum-rich general education classroom.

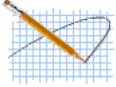
While we reached out to our membership for input on Friday, once we learned of details of the impending discussion, we were not able to receive adequate input over the holiday weekend in order to provide recommendations today. SEAC would like the opportunity to present our testimony in writing to the Board and to the Department within the next two weeks.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Respectfully,

  
Martha Guinan  
SEAC Chair

  
Ivalee Sinclair  
Legislative Committee Chair



Mireille Ellsworth <ellsworthhsta@gmail.com>

02/20/2017 04:10 PM

To testimony\_boe@notes.k12.hi.us  
cc  
Subject TESTIMONY for Human Resources  
Committee meeting Feb. 21, 2017  
9:30 am

TESTIMONY for Hawaii Board of Education, Human Resources Committee Meeting, Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2017 at 9:30 am

#### AGENDA ITEM: IV. A. ESSA Impacts on Teacher Content Certification

Honorable Chair Delima and committee members,

My name is Mireille Ellsworth, and I have been teaching at Waiakea High School for 12 years. I am also a member of the Teacher Leader Workgroup and attended an orientation by HDOE on this topic late last year as well as a more recent "webinar" on this topic earlier this month.

I want to first comment on the practice of informing parents that their child has a teacher who is not certified for the content or grade level of the class in which the child is enrolled. When the HQ (Highly Qualified) requirement was in effect under RttT (Race to the Top), letters were given to the teacher to distribute to parents. This was humiliating and degrading. In many cases, teachers who had been teaching the subject for years and doing a wonderful job were put in the position of distributing these "form" letters yet never given the opportunity to inform parents of their past experience and level of expertise. In other instances, teachers were given classes to teach simply because the school could not make a full "line" of classes for that particular teacher in his or her certified content area. Therefore, again, a teacher who is doing his or her best to serve the needs of the school and the students is humiliated by having to pass out these "letters of shame." I know a social studies teacher whose line was changed from World History to Participation and Democracy and Modern Hawaiian History which required her to spend hundreds of dollars of her own money to take PD courses in the changed content just to be considered "Highly Qualified" then the following year her line changed again to include Geography and Global Studies and that required even more coursework!

Even though the term "Highly Qualified" has gone away, under ESSA, as shown in slide number five, now not only teachers of core academic subjects must be reported when they are not certified in that content area, but teachers of all subject areas. For example, I am licensed to

teach English, grades 7-12, but I also teach acting. Even though I am a former Screen Actors Guild member and worked as a professional actress as a child, took numerous acting classes outside of accredited institutions, observed many acting classes and rehearsals of live productions because my mother ran an acting school and directed plays, I am still technically not qualified to teach acting. Yet I have established a drama program over the past ten years at my school and was even nominated by the Chair of the Performing Arts Department of the University of Hawaii at Hilo to represent America and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, but under ESSA, I am not qualified and must be reported.

I would like to see the Board of Education make the ESSA requirement more constructive and meaningful by sending out a letter to parents that outlines exactly what steps the department is taking to support specific teachers when they are put in the position of teaching outside of their area of certification. Otherwise, the department is "off the hook" by just fulfilling the Federal law requirement but is not accountable for the level of support they claim to provide in the recently passed Strategic Plan. If professional development is the primary approach to Goal 2: Staff Support, it is time the DOE fulfill that promise and utilize all resources at its disposal to support these teachers. Why do we have Complex Area personnel who are not out in the schools helping these teachers by working with them during their prep time to develop units, select materials, and make lesson plans? It's a waste if our specialists at the complex and state level are not helping these teachers in a practical way. Timing is crucial as well. Trainings and other avenues of support need to be at the beginning of the school year.

I urge the BOE to stop trying to fulfill federal requirements just to comply and instead effectively support teachers in this era of crisis when the state is experiencing a chronic teacher shortage. Stop expecting the lowest paid teachers in the nation to seek out and pay for professional development when they should be provided high quality PD that supports their actual teaching assignment, most especially when they have agreed, in the service of students and the DOE, to teach out of their area of expertise.

Thank you for listening to teachers, the ones closest to the students and who know their needs,

Mireille Ellsworth,

Waiakea High School

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