



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

February 15, 2018

TO: Lance A. Mizumoto
Chairperson, Board of Education

FROM: Brian De Lima
Chairperson, Engagement, Strategy, and Efficiency Investigative
Committee

AGENDA ITEM: Investigative Committee (a permitted interaction group pursuant to Hawaii Revised Statutes, Section 92-2.5(b)(1)) investigating public engagement, strategic focus on priorities, and meeting efficiency and preparation: findings and recommendations

I. BACKGROUND

At its November 21, 2017 general business meeting, the Board of Education ("Board") considered a proposal to amend the Board's by-laws so that the Board would hold meetings once a month rather than twice a month in an effort to realize efficiencies in time and resources and increase public access.¹ The Board instead decided to further analyze the issue and established an investigative committee ("Committee") tasked with determining how the Board can better engage the public, strategically focus on priorities, run efficient meetings that are rich in content, and streamline meeting preparation, including considering the proposal for holding meetings once a month. The Board appointed Board Members and standing committee chairpersons Margaret Cox, Nolan Kawano, and Kenneth Uemura, and me as members of the Committee, with myself serving as chair of the Committee.

II. FINDINGS

The Committee considered each issue the Board tasked it with examining both separately and holistically. The Committee describes its findings by issue below.

¹ The once-a-month proposal is available here:
http://boe.hawaii.gov/Meetings/Notices/Meeting%20Material%20Library/GBM_20171121_Action%20on%20By-Law%20Amendment%20%28One%20Meeting%20and%20Ex-Officio%29.pdf.

Public Engagement. The Committee focused primarily on improving the Board's access and transparency to engage the public better. Specifically, the Committee recommends that the Board do the following:

- Continue holding evening meetings but in each county at least once a year, pursuant to the Board's by-laws, and request funding from the Department of Education's ("Department") fund balance allocation if the Legislature does not provide an appropriation to cover the costs. Currently, neighbor island community members can only access Board meetings remotely (via WebEx), by reviewing meeting minutes, or by flying to Oahu. Holding at least one Board meeting quarterly in a different county increases options for access for these communities. Additionally, evening meetings provide access to Board general business meetings to those who may otherwise be unable to attend during regular business hours.
- Continue to strive to make all meeting materials available online when the Board posts its agendas. Having meeting materials available with the agendas not only provides more transparency but also offers an opportunity for the public to better inform itself on topics for discussion, which in turn encourages more informed and relevant public input.
- Explore opportunities for dialogue with stakeholders on agenda items during standing committee meetings. Opportunities for public testimony provide some level of access to the Board, but the Committee believes that expanding access by shifting from a process that simply collects public feedback to one that invites a conversation (in certain circumstance and at the committee chairperson's discretion) will create a better understanding of the opinions of stakeholders and encourage richer dialogue.
- Publicly post responses to Board members' requests for information made during public meetings (provided that the responses do not include any confidential or privileged information), and provide a full listing of information requests on the Board's website. Board members often request information from the Department during Board meetings that the Department is unable to provide at that moment. Currently, the Department follows up by directly providing the requesting Board member with the information after the meeting. It would be more transparent, however, to make the requested information public especially since the public is already aware of these requests for information.

While improving the Board's access and transparency, particularly as it relates to its public meetings, will also improve public engagement, the Committee acknowledges that there is more to citizen engagement and participation than the public meeting process. Therefore, in addition to the recommendations above, the Committee recommends that the Board direct the Board Support Office to research and analyze ways for improving the Board's public engagement beyond Board business meetings.

Strategic Focus on Priorities. The Committee acknowledges that the Board must address many issues and topics, but the Committee finds that the Board should not spread itself thin by trying to tackle too much at once. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Board and its standing committees continue to focus on annual committee priorities, which align with the Board and Department's Joint Strategic Plan and its implementation. Standing committees should revisit their priorities on an annual basis. The Committee also recommends that standing committee chairpersons work with the Board's Executive Director on focusing committee meetings.

Efficient Meetings Rich in Content. The Committee finds that, in order for the Board and its committees to focus on priorities, they must run meetings that do not cover too many topics and provide enough time and information to have deep discussions about the most important issues. Therefore, the Committee recommends that standing committees provide sufficient time for discussion on priorities and policy formulation, including any opportunities for dialogue with stakeholders, as necessary, but limit the items on agendas to priority topics. The Committee also recommends that standing committee chairpersons work with the Board's Executive Director to ensure committee meetings have sufficient time.

Streamlined Meeting Preparation. The Committee finds that the Department and Board Support Office staff use much time and resources to put together both electronic and paper meeting packets. The electronic meeting packets are publicly available via the Board's website, and Board members who use electronic devices during the meetings already utilize the electronic meeting packets. However, the Board does not have enough devices to provide all Board members with electronic meeting packets. Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Board request funding from the Department's fund balance allocation for a one-time purchase of enough electronic devices to eliminate the need for paper meeting packets.

Once-a-Month Meetings. Throughout the memorandum, the Committee provides recommendations to achieve several of the positive outcomes the once-a-month meetings proposal seeks but without reducing the number of general business meetings per month. Nonetheless, the Committee finds that the Board's general business meetings currently average a duration of less than two hours, and removing one of the general business meetings could provide more time for committees to have content-rich discussions on strategic priorities.

Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Board Chairperson use the discretion provided by the Board's by-laws to hold only one general business meeting per month whenever two meetings are unnecessary, provided that standing committee meetings are not stacked on a single day. The Committee again recommends that standing committee chairpersons work with the Board's Executive Director to have focused committee meetings on topics that require broader discussion, especially if there is no general business meeting scheduled and more committee meeting time available.

III. RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends, through unanimous agreement, that the Board adopt its recommendations as described in this memorandum.

Proposed Motion: Move to adopt the recommendations described in Investigative Committee Chairperson Brian De Lima's memorandum dated February 15, 2018.

This report completes the work the Board tasked to the Committee.