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State of Hawaii
Board of Education
Tuesday, February 21, 2017, 1:30 p.m.
1390 Miller Street, Room 404, Honolulu, Hawaii
General Business Meeting, Executive Session

TESTIMONY

Ann Sack Shaver, President, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii offers comments and recommendations to be discussed in Executive Session, Item D: “Update on Hawaii State Teachers Association contract, The Hawaii Government Employee Association contracts, and related Hawaii State Labor Board matters”

Aloha Chair Mizumoto, Vice-Chair De Lima, and Members of the Hawaii State Board of Education:

The League of Women Voters - Hawaii submits the following testimony for your consideration. The League believes there is a DOE teacher placement policy gap that impacts the quality of education for our youngest population; i.e., children in grades K-3. Thus, the League of Women Voters – Hawaii recommends that only qualified early childhood educators having the PK-3 license level field be assigned to teach in grades kindergarten through grade three with the option of placing those educators with a PK-K license level field in kindergarten classrooms. These certifications are currently available, according to the Hawaii Teachers Standards Board, through preparation at local colleges and universities listed on the HTSB website. Currently, placements in the early childhood education grades K-3 are made using the K-6 license. This allows teachers without any early childhood education teacher education or pedagogy to be placed in early childhood classrooms; i.e. grades K-3.

Early Childhood Education Background:

Late 1970s early 1980s: An Early Childhood Teaching Endorsement with 18 credits or more, was offered by University of Hawaii, College of Education. DOE did not recognize the endorsement as a part of licensure.

1990s: DOE informed University of Hawaii they wanted an ‘early childhood teaching endorsement.’

1995: Hawaii Teachers Standards Board (HTSB) was established by Act 240 of the Eighteenth Legislature, State of Hawaii. The HTSB transferred responsibility for setting public school teacher certification standards from the DOE to the HTSB.

2004: The Legislature enacted Act 51, which provided that **kindergarten classes** “be no more than twenty-five students.” [LWV Note: Even in 2004, some thirteen years ago, that figure was two times the recommended teacher-to-student ratio for an optimal kindergarten. Early childhood researchers then recommended a teacher-to-student ratio of one highly capable teacher (with an assistant) and relatively small groups of children; e.g., 10 to 13 students per group (see NIEER, 2004). We understand this kind of ratio has a cost and Hawaii is struggling with funding].

2003-2006: UH Manoa did not have a PK-3 license with their B.ED. degree. When UH Oahu designed their early childhood education program, they found they were able to get the PK-3 license. However, the DOE did not want to accept it as the principals ‘preferred’ a K-6 license, as it gave them more flexibility to place teachers (a national trend at the time). Requests were made to HTSB to include PK-3 Licensure.



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2006: Hawaii Teachers Standards Board recommended PK-3 licensure for DOE grades Kindergarten through grade 3. The Hawaii State Teachers Association refused to endorse the recommendation.

2008: University of Hawaii Teacher Education Elementary Education began identifying their program as that of 'dual preparation' with a PreK-3 License/K-6 License. The program offers 24 credit hours of early childhood education. All UH graduates of the COE Elementary Education program were informed that they could apply for the dual preparation license.

2009: Whether by choice or the principal's discretion (because of *No Child Left Behind*) early childhood education teachers were being moved out of ECE classrooms. Some went to the private sector to be able to continue working with younger children.

Current Policy: A university teacher education program does not license (give teaching 'certificates' or credentials). The student can graduate but not have a license to teach UNLESS they take the appropriate Praxis II exam; i.e., PK-3, K-6 or middle/secondary level. At UH Manoa, they take 2 of the 3 exams for dual certification, and can actually get both credentials without taking the PK-3 exam. **The certification (licensure) requirements for placement of an early childhood educator in a K-3 classroom are the same as the requirements for placement of an elementary education teacher in any K-6 classroom in Hawaii.** The Hawaii Teachers Standards Board website lists a PK-3 or PK-K license level and testing requirements [found at: <http://www.htsb.org/licensing-permits/add-field/>]. However: DOE principals are not required by current policy to ensure teachers placed in Kindergarten through Grade 3 classrooms have the PK-3 license level field as certification to the licensure or that those placed in Kindergarten classrooms have the PK-K license level field. Principals currently have the latitude to place any teacher holding a K-6 license, without having qualifying early education classes, in the K-3 classrooms. But research informs us that our youngest students, possessing many and varied learning capabilities, need teachers who have received special schooling giving them the kind of pedagogical knowledge needed to teach this early age group.

The current placement policy has led to a gap in qualified teachers being placed in our K-3 age group classrooms. A contributing factor has been the HSTA approved process that allows 'bumping' of junior teachers by senior teachers. This process has allowed an elementary licensed teacher who has seniority (more teaching years) and a K-6 license, to 'bump' or replace a kindergarten (or grade 1-3) teacher. It does not matter that the 'bumped' teacher, with fewer teaching years, might have an early childhood elementary certificate or even a graduate degree in early childhood education with years of early education experience or that the senior teacher has absolutely zero knowledge or experience in early childhood education. What makes the difference here is 'time in grade' – something endorsed by the HSTA.

Also, the current 'one-size-fits-all' K-6 certification gives DOE principals flexibility in teacher placement, allowing them to report that every elementary school classroom has a 'highly qualified teacher;' thus, satisfying the federally mandated NCLB. This criteria involves one having an elementary education degree with Elementary Education K-6 license, resulting in every teacher being 'highly qualified' according to NCLB standards. **In reality, placing teachers who have not had ECE schooling and training in these early education; i.e., K-3 classrooms, amounts to out-of-field teacher placement, which is the opposite of having a 'highly qualified' teacher in every classroom.** In some cases, when an early childhood classroom is not available following the 'bump', the 'bumped' teacher, whose qualifications are at the early childhood level, is assigned to teach in the 4-6 grade level. While this kind of placement is acceptable within the existing policy, this is also an *out-of-field* assignment. In many cases the 'bumped' early childhood teacher then either quits the teaching profession entirely or joins the private sector. All of this is damaging to the over-all morale of the school whose staff faces the reality that an HSTA driven policy trumps



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their desire to provide a quality education to all students. It is damaging to the children who lose a truly qualified teacher, as well as their parents who are faced with accepting a lesser quality education outcome for their children. And it negatively impacts the teachers who are either voluntarily or involuntarily assigned to *out-of-field* classrooms. It is costly to the public education system when 'bumped' teachers leave in frustration. And it is expensive in terms of social costs when unqualified teachers incorrectly assess cohorts of early-age learners and wrongly retain them – leading to dropping out of school in later years. Learning differences change rapidly within the early childhood group. Not having a well qualified teacher assessing this young age group means that some kids are going to be wrongly measured – and possibly retained. In reality, very few, if any, children in this age group should be retained – and when they are they are much more likely to drop out of school in later years.

Comments with Recommendations by League of Women Voters – Hawaii:

1. In 2010 voters approved an Amendment to the Constitution of the State of Hawaii that provided for appointed BOE members. For the first time since statehood, accountability was provided for the public school system. The subsequent enabling language written to implement the Constitutional Amendment gave the governor the sole power to select school board members for appointment. Thus, accountability – and responsibility - falls to the governor and the appointed BOE members, with increased public expectation and demands for accountability and improvement in the school system. The HSTA would like the public to believe that 'more money' can provide the fix for a 'quality' education for public schools. The League of Women Voters - Hawaii supports proper funding for schools; however, we also believe that a definition of quality and accountability for receiving such money needs to come first. We also feel there are ways to implement policies that guarantee quality without increasing costs. One of these is to stop the harmful placement of unqualified teachers in our early education classrooms. The policy-setting mechanism; i.e., the Hawaii Teachers Standards Board, already has the proper licensure for early childhood in PreK-3 and PK-K in place. **The BOE simply needs to write correct policy procedure that requires the use of this license in the K-3 DOE classrooms. This will cost zero dollars, and will solve an existing quality gap. This move will serve to ensure the public that the BOE does care about providing accountability at this crucial level of the public education system.**
2. The League has, in prior public testimony, expressed our concerns about this gap in providing quality through having a proper the teacher placement policy for our early childhood population. We have testified over time that this gap has prevented a truly top-level early education for this age group. The cause of the gap centers on the current DOE fostered process that allows any teacher with a K-6 elementary license to be placed in this vulnerable age group. League agrees with research that informs us that teachers assigned to this age group should have a pedagogical background that has prepared them to teach the early childhood level. Thus, League of Women Voters - Hawaii recommends the BOE initiate a policy change requiring teacher placement in grades Kindergarten through Grade 3 to ensure teachers placed in the K-3 classrooms have this pedagogy. All teachers at this classroom level should hold the PK-3 license level for K-3 or the PK-K license level for Kindergarten. The HSTA published the following statement in their 2013 Digest: **"The Association also believes that early childhood programs must be staffed by personnel trained and licensed in early childhood education"** (p. 26, HSTA.org 2013 digest). **With this endorsement from the HSTA, and having the proper PK-3 license level or PK-K license level available through the HTSB; and the current public interest and political will to have a quality education system, we feel that now is the time**



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for the Board of Education to initiate a policy change that would place only teachers having proper PK-3 level or PK-K level (kindergarten only) licensure in K-3 classrooms.

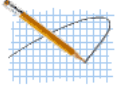
3. With the changed focus on early childhood education, the DOE should want to have Kindergarten through third grade teachers to officially have the ECE background/licensure. **The newly formed policy should state that teachers currently assigned to these grade levels must show they have a proper PK-3 level license for K-3 or PK-K level license for kindergarten licensure.**
4. If teachers already placed in K-3 grades do not have a PK-3 level license or PK-K level license for kindergarten, the already placed teachers should only be allowed to retain these positions through showing they are in the process of taking the 24 needed credits through continuing education that will allow them to gain the PK-3 level or PK-K level license. Should a teacher not show evidence of working toward and completing the required 24 credits within the three year time limit, the teacher can transfer to a Grade 4 through Grade 6 classroom until they have completed, or they can remain at the Grade 4 through Grade 6 level. **Already placed teachers without PK-3 licenses in grades kindergarten to grade 3 and PK-K licenses in kindergarten should be required to complete the continuing education requirement within three years, with the credits counting toward already required continuing education.**
5. **Funding for tuition for necessary continuing education coursework to obtain the qualifying classes could be sought from the Legislature. If courses are obtained at the University of Hawaii, tuition could be waived.** This would be much less expensive than the continual recruitment and hiring process to fill positions vacated by disgruntled teachers, and potential social costs resulting from the current flawed licensure policy that allows a K-6 license holder to be placed in K-3 classrooms.

The above changes will not prevent 'bumping' by senior teachers in the case a senior teacher with proper early childhood licensure 'bumps' a junior teacher with the same or even better education credentials: but it will prevent out-of-field placements, which are harmful to our youngest student population. Having a 'well qualified' classroom teacher in every one of Hawaii's early childhood classrooms is a realistic goal – and doable in some instances at absolutely zero financial cost. A complete policy revamp would have some initial cost, over a maximum of three years. Correcting this education policy would serve to show the public that the BOE is committed to providing a quality education to all students, including our youngest citizens.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Ann Sack Shaver, Ph.D.
President, League of Women Voters – Hawaii
alshaver@me.com
Tele: 808-696-4186



Mireille Ellsworth <ellsworthsta@gmail.com>

02/20/2017 04:10 PM

To testimony_boe@notes.k12.hi.us
cc
Subject TESTIMONY for General Business
Meeting Feb. 21, 2017 1:30 pm

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

ellsworthhsta@gmail.com

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KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS®

Date: February 21, 2017
To: Board of Education, General Business Meeting
When: 1:30 p.m.
Testifier: Wai‘ale‘ale Sarsona
Agenda Item: IV. B. Finance and Infrastructure Committee Report

Aloha! My name is Wai‘ale‘ale Sarsona, and I serve as the Managing Director of the Kūamahi Community Education Group of Kamehameha Schools. We are writing to express our support for funding in the state budget relating to the Office of Hawaiian Education and offer the following comments:

Although planned increased funding for the Office of Hawaiian Education of the Department of Education was not initially included in the Governor’s Executive Budget, we are encouraged that legislators have expressed in preliminary hearings a willingness to address the Office’s needs.

Kamehameha Schools advocates for and supports the achievement of Hawai‘i’s Native Hawaiian public school students. As such, we have been a collaborator with the Board of Education, the Department of Education and, specifically, the Office of Hawaiian Education. We believe that the inclusion of funding for the positions necessary to fulfill the mission of the office is consistent with the Board and Department’s approved strategic plan and essential to advance the education of the children of the state. We acknowledge the Board of Education’s efforts in this area and want to be a part of the ongoing dialog surrounding support for the Office of Hawaiian Education.

Founded in 1887, Kamehameha Schools is an organization striving to advance a thriving Lāhui where all Native Hawaiians are successful, grounded in traditional values, and leading in the local and global communities. We believe that community success is individual success, Hawaiian culture-based education leads to academic success and local leadership drives global leadership. ‘A‘ohe hana nui ke alu ‘ia. No task is too large when we all work together! Mahalo nui.