

RE: Public Testimony submittal for October 3, 2017 General Business Meeting.

Dear Chair Mizumoto and Members of the Board.

On the agenda of Board meeting September 19, 2017 there were 32 pages of [*Public Testimony on Board of Education \("Board"\) Agenda Items](#) ***new material 09/19/2017***.

Many testimonies referred to the state of Special Education in Hawaii Public Schools.

Because there was so much, I decided to read each one of them to see if there were similar themes. As I noticed the similarity, I decided to produce the document below.

It was unfortunate for me, I did not get to hear this meeting.

I submit the following and look forward to the meeting minutes and how the Board addressed so many concerns.

Because they were all separately submitted, it became a large reading assignment. It also could appear as negative because some might perceive it as complaining.

This is NOT complaining. It is frustration with the system, going unheard, having a "it is what it is" philosophy.

Unfortunately, Hawaii has trained those in Public School Education to submit testimony to the BOE. There is no guarantee that the BOE will do anything with the testimonies but acknowledge receipt.

I'm submitting this early to give you time to read this.

Condensed version of five pages rather the longer version.

Sincerely,

Susan A. Pcola-Davis

Board of Education Meeting of September 19, 2017

Testimonies Regarding Special Education [Not an agenda item]

Special Education

CONCERNS:

The Standards-Based IEP process.

We (teachers) need to write these standards-based IEP but there has been a disconnect between the standards listed on the IEP versus their functional level.

One example is writing IEP for students on a certificate track and are in Community Based Instruction (CBI) courses. Difference between functional reading level and student not being at grade level.

My question is, when writing standards-based IEP for students in the CBI setting, are we required to continue to follow the standards-based IEP structure or do teacher base the goals on their functional levels?

Hawaii schools need uniformed data based programs to be used for collecting baselines for what the student CAN do. This brings me to the GRADE. What a joke! I have a student reading near 1st and 2nd grade levels and they MUST do the 7th grade GRADE assessment to assess their reading?! All this gave the student and myself was frustrating and let me know what they can NOT do. I did not use ANY of this GRADE information in the IEP PLEP because it is irrelevant. Do away with the GRADE!

Another issue is regarding standards-based IEPs for students in the Community-Based Instruction (CBI) classrooms. How do SPED teachers create standards-based goals if their students are not at grade level standards? If we are expected to base goals on their functional levels, there is no place on the IEP document to address both functional and grade level goals.

eCSSS System.

As someone who mentors new SPED teachers, it's very difficult teaching them to navigate a system that isn't user friendly. I'm sure there are simple systems out there to write IEP so I think the department needs to look at other systems that would make it user friendly for all SPED teachers.

Special Ed teachers and General Ed teachers.

The additional responsibilities of a special education teacher surpasses that of a regular education teacher.

Overwhelmed with duties that go beyond the role of a teacher.

Special education teachers are responsible to develop Individual Education Plans (IEP) for their students.

Although we are not necessarily the "teachers" to those students, we have to:

- monitor progress,
- create data sheets,
- fill out and send home progress reports (beyond the regular report cards),
- document everything that occurs,
- maintain federal and state compliance issues,
- communicate with outside agency providers (if applicable),
- attend IEP meetings almost daily (staying way beyond 3:00pm) and the list goes on and on. The additional responsibilities of a special education teacher surpasses that of a regular education teacher.

We don't have specific language in our teacher contract that gives us protection and rights to our differing responsibilities.

There is a lack of special education teachers that is a constant threat to the quality of public education these students deserve.

Being a Special Ed teacher and being a care coordinator are two separate jobs and should be treated as such.

General Ed teachers do not have the experience or knowledge of what the multiple roles entail to include time, energy, effort, and knowledge that is needed to be successful as a special Ed teacher and care coordinator at the same time.

Many Special Education students are placed in a regular education classroom with little or no support.

- A huge gap exists between what these students can do on their own and what their new classrooms demand of them.
- Please HELP these Special Education students to HELP themselves. Make available **tutoring** outside of the classroom to bridge the gap between their skill level and grade level.

The amount of work and expectation does not match the pay. Perhaps a special incentive pay or extra planning time would convince more folks to apply and stay in the positions.

IEPs take a lot of time to do the right way. Give us the time and training we need.

Training is lacking. We were sat down and trained on IEP writing in one long day and we never had follow up training.

We should each have a mentor who goes through the first few IEPs with us until we've got the hang of it

"Inclusion" teachers are being scheduled so that their attention is divided between multiple classes and grade levels, when best practice would have a special educator in one consistent class for the day.

Special educators are expected to perform as inclusion teachers without the resource of time.

- Just putting more students in the general educational classroom won't produce academic gains, it could have the opposite effect. Only focusing on placing special needs students in the classroom without the proper support can be very damaging.

- If special education students are feeling overwhelmed with the general educational curriculum, they tend to shut down or behavior issues tend to accumulate.
- If a student is doing work at their instructional level which is different than their peers, they could shut down or it could create negative behavior problems.
- Just focusing on putting special needs students in the general educational classroom can also interfere with the general educational students' academic achievement.
- Forcing special education students into the general education classroom without proper supports can create major problems.
- If we truly want to increase academic achievement in the general educational classroom for students with special needs it will take more support for those students than what the proportional methodology is currently allocating!

Because of the high turnover of special education teachers, many are new to the school and are not given adequate training in the co-teaching/inclusion model.

Special education teachers are expected to plan and teach in the same fashion as general educators, and keep up with the requirements of writing and implementing IEPs, ensuring that plans are implemented and services are carried out as the care coordinator.

Difference in Pay

Instead of paying teachers who leave special education and then come back to the field the ten-thousand-dollar bonus, why not just pay that to us now so we will be able and willing to stay for more than just a few years.

Board advocate for Individual Education Program (IEP) Meetings to be done during the contractual school day and/or allow administrators the ability to pay teachers more for work outside the contractual school day. This would significantly help with recruitment and retention of special education teachers.

Safety

Hiring more one-to-one EAs

BOE Policy

According to BOE Policy 105.13, " The appropriate inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classroom environments requires: Appropriate staffing, adequate planning time, resources, and supports necessary to maintain a student in the least restrictive setting. This includes support and training for special education and general education teachers."

We further sabotage our students with special needs by holding them to the same grade level standards as their peers when, **by law**, teachers are modifying lessons to these students' levels so that they are not completely frustrated (which often leads them to give up instead of progress from where they are).

Setting an increasing percentage goal for placing students in Inclusion classes fails to recognize the needs of those unable to succeed in that setting due to their disabilities. This goal may even be violation of Federal law.

In 2017 the previous Department of Education leadership's new strategic plan calls for higher amount of special education students to be placed in the general educational classroom without any new supports or positions. Hawaii has the lowest national test scores and has the lowest number of students receiving their special educational services in the general education classroom. The problem isn't due to too much pulled out servicing, it is because we have overcrowded schools, overcrowded classrooms, and not enough positions, thanks to the cuts to the staffing formula.

Most of Policy 105-13: Inclusion, is not happening. Yes, the IEP meetings comply because all IEP Team members are present and provide input at the meeting. However, outside of the meeting there is no consistent format or vehicle of collaboration between the staff members involved with the students. Outside of the IEP team meetings collaboration is near nonexistent. I have taken it upon myself to create Google documents that serve as live, ongoing notes for students with IEPs that I see in my various classes, as well as "snapshot" documents of students on my caseload so that the staff who service the student can see summarized condensed important and relevant information about the student, as well as a table that includes all the staff and their contacts who serve the student. I have received positive feedback for from my fellow teachers about this system thus far.

Another portion of Policy 105-13 states, in part, that there are appropriate resources and supports for the students on IEPs. I just held my first annual IEP and it was challenging to gather baseline data on the student because there was and is no clear curriculum, tools, assessments, etc. to be used to collect the most accurate baseline measures of the students reading, writing, and math. I was referred to the STAR testing. However, this is a sterile standardized test taken on a computer; I have not heard the student read to me, I have not been able to see his thought process in solving math; I have not seen how the students goes about planning and executing their writing.

Hawaii schools need uniformed data based programs to be used for collecting baselines for what the student CAN do. This brings me to the GRADE. What a joke! I have a student reading near 1st and 2nd grade levels and they MUST do the 7th grade GRADE assessment to assess their reading?! All this gave the student and myself was frustrating and let me know what they can NOT do. I did not use ANY of this GRADE information in the IEP PLEP because it is irrelevant. Do away with the GRADE!

The same portion of Policy 105-13 also states that training for general education and Special Education teachers is made available. Tying this with the portion of the policy that mentions the development of multiple teaching and learning techniques and strategies that support collaboration for services for those with IEPs.

I am told that I am to "co-teach" with the 4 teachers who span 2 subject matters, 3 different grade levels, and 6 different class periods. However, none of the general education teachers and none of the special education teachers at my school have had training on co-teaching.

Policy 105-12: Special Education and Related Services also lists that staff are to be provided staff development and teacher training relevant to SPED services. Newly hired SPED teachers and related service members had a two-day IEP training to go over the IEP program used by Hawaii. This is not sufficient; to learn one program but not the reasoning and foundational theories and practices that drive this program and that drive the policies for what we are required to do.

Develop a system to ensure both general and special education teachers have enough planning time to dive into curriculum and make modifications and/or accommodations. Because Special Education teachers act as classroom teachers and case managers, there is not enough time within our contractual hours to plan effectively to address students' needs.



1200 Ala Kapuna Street ♦ Honolulu, Hawaii 96819
Tel: (808) 833-2711 ♦ Fax: (808) 839-7106 ♦ Web: www.hsta.org

Corey Rosenlee
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Wilbert Holck
Executive Director

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

RE: AGENDA ITEM VI, B, BOARD ACTION ON UPDATES TO STRATEGIC
PLAN INDICATORS (TEACHER VACANCIES)

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2017

COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Mizumoto and Members of the Committee:

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association supports revising the "teacher positions filled" indicator of the Joint BOE-DOE 2017-2020 Strategic Plan to include only the percentage of positions filled by SATEP (state approved teacher education program) completing teachers as of August 1st of each school year. Currently, the Strategic Plan's "positions filled" indicator includes teachers who have not completed a SATEP program, such as emergency hires. Including only SATEP teachers will hold the department to a more rigorous standard in reducing teacher turnover and incentivize the recruitment and retention of quality, well-trained educators.

That said, we encourage the board to maintain the higher percentage goal of 98 percent of teacher positions filled each year. With approximately 13,000 teaching positions in Hawai'i's public school system, every 1 percent equals roughly 130 teachers. Thus, decreasing the state's 2020 SATEP goal from 98 percent to 96 percent equates to a reduction of approximately 260 teachers, leaving potentially thousands of students without a qualified teacher to provide effective instruction and guide their learning processes.

Additionally, we request the provision of the following data from the department. First, and in alignment with the DOE's suggested revision, how many teacher vacancies existed on August 1 of the 2017-2018 school year and how many active

teachers held SATEP certifications as of that date? Second, how many students were being given instruction by a non-SATEP teacher at any point during the 2016-2017 school year, including long-term substitutes. Knowing this data would afford timely insight into the extent of the state's teacher shortage crisis and, in turn, lay an up-to-date foundation upon which stakeholders may build strategies to solve the problem.

Every child deserves a first-rate learning experience. Please consider our recommendations, offered on behalf of all public school teachers, when amending the Strategic Plan to increase our children's access to qualified teachers.

HONOLULU OFFICE

500 Ala Moana Blvd.
Suite 3-400
Honolulu, HI 96813
(808) 521-1371

KONA OFFICE

75-5706 Kuakini Hwy.
Suite 102
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

PO Box 2869
Kailua-Kona, HI 96745
(808) 769-4526

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@TeachForAmericaHawaii



@TFAHawaii



An AmeriCorps Program

October 3, 2017

The Honorable Lance A. Mizumoto
Chairperson, Board of Education
PO Box 2360
Honolulu, HI 96804



RE: Testimony Providing Comments and Revisions on Agenda Item VI.B:
Board Action on Updates to Strategic Plan Indicators (teacher vacancies)

Chair Mizumoto and Board Members:

Teach For America - Hawai'i (TFA Hawai'i) strongly agrees that teachers play a vital role in providing students a quality education. We also strongly agree with the Board of Education's commitment to focus on equity and ensuring our marginalized students have equitable access to quality teachers. We are concerned, however, with defining and equating "quality teachers" with "SATEP teachers" as this has the potential to exclude teachers enrolled in alternative education preparation programs. We are likewise concerned with the personnel implication of shifting the state level focus exclusively toward SATEP teachers, and the impact this may have on promoting and resourcing alternative education providers who may serve unique needs in our education landscape.

We humbly request that the definition be clarified and broadened as follows (with concomitant modifications to the implication for personnel and other relevant areas):

Revising the definition of "Teacher Positions Filled" to measuring the percentage of teacher positions filled at the start of the school year by teachers who have completed a State Approved Teacher Education Program (SATEP) or are enrolled in an alternative education program.

TFA Hawai'i is one of Hawai'i's alternative teacher preparation program, fully accredited by the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) and recognized by the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board. Teachers enrolled in our program are required to take the relevant Praxis content exam(s) or 30 credits in the content area earned at an accredited educational institution. Prior to teaching in Hawai'i, they complete a rigorous and intensive summer training program which includes serving as the lead instructor for a summer school classroom. As teachers, they receive continued coaching and access to ongoing professional development opportunities.

TEACHFORAMERICA

One day, all children in this nation will have the opportunity to obtain an excellent education.

We are proud to be a long standing partner of the Hawai'i Department of Education in working to recruit, develop, and support a network of leaders committed to educational equity. We currently support 248 teachers in Hawai'i like Sarah Kern, recognized in 2016 as a Hawai'i Milken Educator "Teacher of Promise" and Kay Beach, recognized in 2016 as the Hawai'i State Public Charter School Teacher of the Year. Among our teachers are 26 Department Head and/or Grade Level Chairs and 10 school based instructional coaches. Our alumni also impact education outside the classroom as administrators, such as Beth Higashi, VP at Waipahu High School; state education officers, such as Courtney Gill in the Office of Strategy, Innovation, and Performance; and through leading at partner organizations such as Stephen Schatz at P-20 Hawai'i.

Beyond Teach For America, we understand there are other alternative education programs and providers who contribute in meaningful ways to our education landscape, including but not limited to alternative programs for Hawaiian language teachers. We respectfully submit that completing a SATEP is one valuable pathway, but not the only pathway to filling teacher positions with effective teachers.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony. We look forward to continuing to partner with the Department of Education and the Board of Education in helping to recruit, develop, and support passionate and effective educators for all our students.

Mahalo,



Jill Baldemor
Executive Director
Teach For America - Hawai'i