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To testimony\_boe@notes.k12.hi.us  
 cc  
 Subject Testimony

- Jonathon Medeiros, NBCT, State Office Teacher HODOE, Kauai Teacher Fellowship - Director
- General Business Meeting
- Agenda item: VI. Action Items
  - A. [Board Action on adoption of Board and Department strategic priorities for 2019-2020 school year](#)
- Comment (support with changes)

While I appreciate Chair Payne's thoughtful discussion of the 5 priorities' evolution over the past few years and how they relate to Supt's 5 promises, I hesitate to support her final recommendation. By and large, the redline adjustments to the 5 priorities serve a good purpose, but leaving out the 5 promises loses many important concepts. For example, in regards to the Equity and Access priority, and the corresponding Equity promises, Chair Payne states that the mitigation of disempowering differences to enable students to thrive is the same as "inspire all students to succeed." This move leaves out a specific call for the important protections of our vulnerable students, those whose disempowering differences might include race, economic status, gender, sexuality, identity. I would go on to argue that being more specific about the "disempowering differences" is also important.

In general, the move to redline parts of the 5 priorities and then leave out the 5 promises leads to important ideas and protections being left by the wayside. I feel it is imperative that the 5 promises be left in tact and as part of the 5 priorities document, knowing that these promises require the shifts that Chair Payne outlines. I would love to discuss these ideas in detail with any member of the BOE and I truly hope that the 5 promises are not left off the priorities doc for the 19/20 school year.

Aloha,  
 Jon Medeiros, NBCT

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June 6, 2019

Hawai'i Board of Education  
General Business Meeting  
Catherine Payne, Chair  
Brian De Lima, Vice Chair

Aloha Chair Payne, Vice Chair De Lima, and Members,

We would like to comment on VI. A. Board Action on adoption of Board and Department strategic priorities for 2019-2020 school year.

We are a group of equity in education advocates that represent the voices of Native Hawaiian, parent, disability, higher education, multilingual, social justice, and education reform communities, and are committed to advocate for students who have historically struggled in our public education system.

We would like to acknowledge and applaud the Department for looking beyond only quantitative indicators to adding qualitative indicators that capture a more robust picture of the whole child. We concur that evaluation should exemplify a **balanced approach of both quantitative and qualitative measures**, and we look forward to conversations on "*what we value and then how to measure what we value.*"

We have come together as signatories on this letter as organizations, identified by the organization name in parenthesis, and as individuals who are not representing affiliated organizations.

Mahalo,

Martha Guinan (Special Education Advisory Council)  
Patricia Halagao  
Brook Chapman de Sousa  
Gavin Thornton (Hawai'i Appleseed)  
Cheri Nakamura  
Paula Adams (Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance)  
Deborah Zysman (Hawai'i Children's Action Network)

June 5, 2019

State of Hawaii Board of Education  
attn: Catherine Payne, Chair  
Catherine\_Payne@notes.k12.hi.us

re: 6/6/19 GBM Agenda Item VI.A. - Board Action on Board and Department strategic priorities for the 2019-2020 school year.

Aloha Board of Education Chair,

I ask that you share this letter with all the members of the Board of Education so they may consider my comments when taking action on Agenda Item VI.A. - Board Action on Board and Department strategic priorities for the 2019-2020 school year.

## Board Priority A

2019-2020 Board Priorities
<b>A. Equity and Access</b>
Ensuring that the appropriate policies, structures, and resources are in place to guarantee the advancement of access and support structures that <del>allow</del> <u>inspire</u> all students to <del>engage in learning through the core curriculum design</del> <u>succeed in school and life</u> . This priority references special education and English Learners in particular, but does not preclude issues like civil rights and Title IX.

I recommend an amendment to the proposed amendment to Board Priority A by inserting the words “enable and” before the word “inspire” so that the amendment reads as follows:

...guarantee the advancement of access and support structures that enable and inspire all students to succeed in school and life.

### REASONING:

To inspire someone to do something, but not provide the tools needed to acquire the dream is frustrating. It’s like inspiring someone to bake a cake, and then not giving them access to an oven. In addition to inspiring students, policies and structures need to **enable** students to achieve their goals. A Board Priority that only inspires but does not enable places all the responsibility of achieving equity and access on students, and does not address the

responsibility of the Board to provide policies that enable success. My recommended change to the wording at least hints at this responsibility.

## Board Priority D

2019-2020 Board Priorities
<b>D. Staff Professional Development, Recruitment, and Retention</b>
Ensuring that the appropriate policies, structures, and resources are in place to allow for the establishment of a dynamic learning community <u>that is responsive to student reflections on the quality and relevance of their learning and</u> designed to continuously develop staff capacity to lead the work that results in high student achievement and the development of clear leadership pathways, supports, and incentives that attract and retain talent.

I recommend an amendment to the proposed amendment to Board Priority D by inserting the words “**parent and**” before the words “student reflections”; deleting the word “their”; and inserting the words, “**the student’s**” before the words “learning and designed” so that the amendment reads as follows:

...to allow for the establishment of a dynamic learning community that is responsive to parent and student reflections on the quality and relevance of ~~their~~ the student’s learning and designed to...

### REASONING:

Student reflections on the quality and relevance of their learning are valuable for student-centered learning. However, the amendment as worded by the Chair does not include an opportunity for reflections to develop the capacity of those who are educating students by students not capable of such reflections. This would include almost all elementary school students. In the spirit of Board Priority E, parents’

reflections designed to develop staff capacity are an important component in communications that help inform decision-making. Including parent reflections in the Board Priority D amendment opens the door to input from parents who can speak for children who cannot adequately reflect on the quality and relevance of their learning; excluding parent reflections locks out K-5 student/family/parent input on Board Priority D.

## Board Priority E

2019-2020 Board Priorities
<b>E. Communication and Engagement</b>
Ensuring that the appropriate policies, structures, and resources are in place so the Department and Board thoughtfully and intentionally engage with students, staff, families, and community stakeholders in two-way communications that will help to inform decision-making and priority setting <u>(particularly with respect to the development of a new strategic plan)</u> and improve transparency and access to information.

Please do not adopt the proposed amendment to Board Priority E.

### REASONING:

Development of a new strategic plan is already part of Board Priority E which specifies engagement with stakeholders to help inform decision-making. Indeed, there will be decisions to be made about the new strategic plan, but it is not only unnecessary to put special emphasis on this one topic, such language will be to the detriment of all other issues which have been sitting on the priority docket for quite a while.

This amendment hinders the possibility of conversations on issues of transparency, access to information, and how to authentically engage stakeholders. Development of a new strategic plan would be better served by the Board analyzing what it has accomplished with regard to **Communication and Engagement** since the *last* strategic plan was adopted. Putting review and analysis of these topics on the agenda this

year, giving them just as much priority as the new strategic plan and an opportunity for public comment, accomplishes the amendment’s objective without limiting communication on equally important issues. I see no benefit to stakeholders in adopting this amendment.

Lastly, I would like offer the Board a “bright spot” from the annals of a Grade 5 SpEd/ELL and some words of wisdom acquired during this school year that has great import pending actions when shifting decision making from state level to school level. I fear the pendulum may be swing too far too fast in an opposite direction, when balance is what we really need at this time. I thought it was a brilliant move when the Board of Education standardized the curriculum across the State. Now, I fear that backlash may send this decision crumbling.

Shifting decision making from state level to school level. Part of the Empowerment Promise includes shifting decision making and accountability for school design and curriculum from the complex and state levels to the school level, closest to the students.<sup>7</sup> At the school level, the shift would result in things like school leadership teams partnering with teachers to design schools aligned with student voice and interests, community resources, parent input, and local context. The complex area and state levels would shift its work to focus on capacity building, leadership development, talent management, standard setting, resource development, and collaborative planning and articulation in support of each school’s articulated needs. Shifts at both levels must happen to ensure proper supports for empowerment at the school level. At the Board level, the Board would need to understand which decisions are shifting from the complex area and state levels to the school level and whether any decision-making and accountability powers it currently exercises will be shifted to its school-level counterpart, the School Community Council.

This year, the SpEd student I tutor made amazing gains, but this happened *only* after the parent and I insisted that the school teach him using the *Wonders* reading curriculum and the *Stepping Stones* math curriculum. Prior to that, for the first semester, his education was going nowhere as his probationary SpEd teacher (in her second year of teaching, and without any formal training in Special Education) invented her own curriculum.

I suggest that we leave the design of curriculum aligned with the Common Core standards up to the professionals, and that the Board set policies that deviation from a professionally-designed curriculum can occur, but only when the new curriculum has been peer-reviewed, and is *better*. I do not trust school administrators and teachers in Hawaii to be able to write a curriculum that can do better than, say, *Stepping Stones*.

These i-Ready diagnostic scores show what can be accomplished with a SpEd student when the teachers are force to use a professionally-designed curriculum.

i-Ready Math	8/16/18	5/30/19
Overall ↑	● Grade 1	● Early 5
Number and Operations ↑	● Grade 1	● Grade 4
Algebra and Algebraic Thinking ↑	● Grade 1	● Mid 5
Measurement and Data ↑	● Grade 1	● Mid 5
Geometry ↑	● Grade K	● Grade 4

i-Ready Reading	8/16/18	5/30/19
Overall ↑	● Grade 2	● Grade 4
Phonological Awareness*	● Tested Out	● Tested Out
Phonics* ↑	● Grade 1	● Tested Out
High-Frequency Words*	● Tested Out	● Tested Out
Vocabulary ↑	● Grade 2	● Grade 3
Comprehension: Literature ↑	● Grade 2	● Grade 4
Comprehension: Informational Text ↑	● Grade 2	● Grade 4

Mahalo for your consideration,

Vanessa Ott

cc: Brian De Lima, BOE Vice Chair; Brian\_De\_Lima@notes.k12.hi.us  
BOE Director; boe\_hawaii@notes.k12.hi.us