

November 18, 2020

State of Hawai'i Board of Education: testimony.BOE@boe.hawaii.gov

Testimony re: **19-Nov-2020 GBM Agenda Item VII.H -- Superintendent's Priorities**

Aloha Board of Education Members,

How many times have you heard this?

Research demonstrates that strong relationships between schools, families, and community members can positively affect student achievement and outcomes.¹

Or this?

It takes a village to raise a child.

Considering the importance authentic family & community engagement in building a world class education system, it is curious why this is never a priority for the Superintendent. The DOE is in dire need of training for all employees concerning what authentic family & community engagement is, what it looks like, and what it doesn't look like. All stakeholders need the DOE to do better. We need systems of accountability that measure authentic family and community engagement and ensure that Complex Areas and local schools are meeting reasonable professional standards for collaboration, cooperation, openness, transparency, and access to local schools for parents, and parent assistants, and community volunteers.

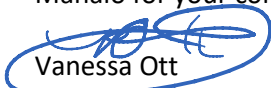
Let's be clear, Public/Private Partnerships are **not** authentic community engagement. Once an organization or a company becomes involved the relationship is not about involving parents and community members. The people involved are often active only as long as they're paid to do it. That fact applies equally to DOE employees as well as the company or organization with which the DOE makes some type of arrangement.

Authentic Parent & Community Engagement happens at the community and school level. Parents and community *volunteers* are involved because they have a stake in the outcomes that goes beyond money. When you see authentic engagement, you see parents and community members encouraged to be involved in our keiki's daily education. These individuals are welcome to visit the school (after passing background checks). Parents who can't speak English are allowed to have their own community assistant help them communicate. Community members' skills and assets are put to good use. Teachers and home educators collaborate and communicate. I'm not seeing this. Quite the opposite. It's rather hostile, in fact.

What I *have* seen is an expensive PCNC program that's a bumbling joke, most likely because there is no system of accountability for any defined outcomes. There is no system of intelligently measuring the success of authentic Parent & Community Engagement at each school or at the State level. For example, the School Community Council system hasn't been updated in over a decade, and all the complaints about how they *aren't* working never seem to see the light of day.

SOMEDAY, I hope that AUTHENTIC FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT becomes a DOE priority.

Mahalo for your consideration,



Vanessa Ott

¹ *Top Benefits of Family and Community Engagement* - November 8, 2018. Hanover Research www.hanoverresearch.com/insights-blog/top-benefits-of-family-and-community-engagement/