

**Testimony By Jim Shon, Executive Director - HiTech Quest
Before the House Committees on Education, Human Services and Public
Housing**

RE: SB 2241, SB 2242, SB2162

Senate Committees on Education, Human Services and Public Housing

DATE: Monday, January 28, 2008
TIME: 1:15 pm
PLACE: Conference Room 225

HiTech Quest Supports these bills.

For a number of years HiTech Quest has been involved in facilitating project-based learning in Hawaii's schools. (Please see attached sheet for a summary of our activities.) We have observed that the time and financial constraints on schools inhibits efforts to bring innovative programs to students that are often best delivered outside of the traditional school scheduled day.

Recently, the State of Hawaii embarked on an ambitious effort to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) in our public schools and college campuses. In order for this to bear real fruit in the near term, there is the need for an agency to facilitate, coordinate, and broker the partnerships between schools, colleges, client organizations, and the business community. HiTech Quest is currently exploring opportunities to incorporate project based learning into the Senior Project, as well as to assist in the State's efforts to promote STEM learning.

Any additional resources that can enable our schools to add these innovative educational strategies to the school curriculum and to engage a larger percentage of students is to be commended.

We would suggest that one important strategy for limited funding is to focus on those schools that already have thematic academies to encourage their further development and enhancement.

A recent report by the Hawaii Educational Policy Center on the teacher shortage includes a comprehensive list of hard to staff schools. These should also be considered in targeting your resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.
Jim Shon

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About HiTech Quest

Over the past five years HTQ has sponsored more than 250 projects involving 649 students from 33 schools (public, private and home school). More than \$100,000.00 in scholarship money and software prizes has been awarded in recognition of the student's accomplishments.

The 2007 HiTech Quest Strategic Plan calls for:

- Recruiting Teacher Coordinators with Project Learning Teams
- Coordination and execution of HTQ Project Showcase Technology-focused enrichment programs to enable youth to develop additional skills that will enable them to be successful in the technology industry.
- The technology-focused enrichment programs will challenge students to develop additional technical skills. Because the programs are project-based in a real-world context, the participants develop an understanding of what will take to be successful in a career in this highly competitive, ever changing industry.

In this context HiTech Quest serves as a “case manager” to facilitate partnerships between businesses, sponsors and foundations willing to invest in education, client organizations needing a service, a teacher with a student project learning team, and a business mentor for the learning team. Specifically, HTQ provides:

- Administration support and technical assistance for Project Learning Teams in High Schools
- Recruiting & coordination for Volunteer Business Mentors
- Funding for Teacher Coordinators
- Recruiting client organizations and sponsor organizations
- Recruiting Teacher Coordinators with Project Learning Teams
- Coordination and execution of HTQ Project Showcase
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For High School Teachers and Learning Teams, HiTech Quest Provides

- Project-based, real-world, hands-on educational experiences
- Ties to local business community – the viability of a career in Hawai'i
- Leadership skills in technology
- Teacher Training in project-based learning strategies and techniques
- Additional income
- Investment in technologies and capabilities for the classroom
- Opportunities for after school and vacation engagement

A non-profit organization whose mission is to use contextual and project-based learning experiences in conjunction with the secondary education and business communities to help build a strong technology workforce in Hawaii. 2