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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION

RE: SCR 73/SR 44 - REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO  
ESTABLISH AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO IDENTIFY BEST  
PRACTICES FOR PROJECT-BASED LEARNING.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2016

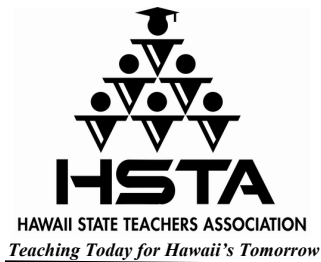
COREY ROSENLEE, PRESIDENT  
HAWAII STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Chair Kidani and Members of the Committee:

The Hawaii State Teachers Association **supports SCR 73/SR 44**, requesting the Department of Education to establish an advisory committee to identify best practices for project-based learning.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning essential knowledge and life-enhancing skills through an extended, student-influenced inquiry process structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks that are true authentic assessments.

Over the past decade, the No Child Left Behind Act has created a new era of student and teacher accountability. This focus on a test and punish culture has pushed out the progress we were seeing in Hawaii, especially with the recent addition of using the SBAC and the curriculum that the DOE instructed schools to use to align with CCSS (Springboard and Wonders for ELA, and Go Math and Stepping Stones for math). Prior to this restrictive curriculum, many of our public schools had teachers using Project-Based Learning. True accountability and ownership are two important skills that we instill in our students, not through standardized testing, and common curriculum, but through project-based learning that engages students in authentic learning experiences that connect to real world



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problems and solutions. **We urge the DOE to turn to its teacher-experts already in our public school system to gather their knowledge and have these teachers share their best practices to revitalize Project-Based Learning once again in our public schools in Hawaii.**

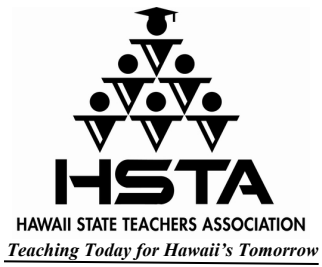
These teachers will tell you that true quality project-based learning shifts instruction away from the teacher to student accountability and ownership. Through PBL students become autonomous, explore concepts they are interested in, and truly become passionate experts in their field of study through a student-centered approach. Teachers become the “guide on the side” instead of the “sage of the stage” and help their students develop their abilities to not only self-manage but also set achievable and attainable goals. Students also learn critical thinking, collaboration through their projects.

In PBL students develop questions about complex, intriguing, subjects. When students encounter challenges or difficult concepts and ideas, they naturally formulate questions such as, “What’s going on? Why is this happening? What does this mean? What will happen in the future?” Finding the answers requires critical thinking, innovation, research, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Another essential element in a successful PBL classroom is student reflection. Students reflect on both their challenges and their successes and present these to their class and many times to their community. As you can see, teaching with the PBL approach is much more than "covering content." We're teaching our students the skills needed to flourish in our ever-changing world.

Project-based Learning, increases student motivation and engagement in learning, is more effective than traditional instruction in increasing academic achievement, improves student retention of knowledge over time, improves mastery of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and is especially effective with lower-achieving students.

**We have the experts within our schools and request that the DOE form the advisory committee from existing teachers in our public schools who have successfully taught PBL to identify best practices for project-based**



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**learning.** Therefore, the Hawaii State Teachers Association asks your committee to **support** this resolution.