New Business Item 26-01
Introduced August 14, 2026

TITLE: Appointment of an Interim Executive Director for a Term, Effective 8/17/26

The Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board (HTSB) approves the appointment of Licensing Specialist Dr. Mitzie Higa as Interim Executive Director effective August 17, 2026.

Rationale/Background:
Dr. Mitzie Higa has earned multiple degrees in education fields, including a Bachelor of Education from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in the Kalama Cohort, a Master of Arts in Teaching with a Specialization in National Board Certification Teacher and Leadership from National University, and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership in Urban Education, K-12 through Higher Education from the University of Southern California.

Dr. Higa's career as a teacher began within the Hawai'i Department of Education in 2000, serving in both primary and upper elementary grades. She also served as Technology Coordinator, Curriculum Coordinator, and ELL Coordinator. She later worked as a lecturer at the University of Hawai'i at West Oahu in its Elementary Education State Approved Teacher Education Program. Dr. Higa was a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) from 2007-2017 before switching to a staff position at the Hawai'i State Teachers Association, where she was their Government Relations Specialist working to ensure laws were passed that would support public school teachers, both traditional and charter, in Hawai'i and advocating on their behalf to move the profession forward.

Currently, as a Licensing Specialist for HTSB, Dr. Higa has spearheaded the initiation of a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program for K-12 teachers in Hawai'i. She collaborated with the National Center for Grow Your Own (NCGYO) and the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) to write the State Apprenticeship Expansion Formula (SAEF) grant, as well as the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 teachers for Hawai'i. HTSB, as the sponsor, and DLIR were awarded the SAEF grant from the Federal Department of Labor to fund the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program for K-12 teachers. The State Apprenticeship Council approved the Standards of Apprenticeship on June 30, 2026, after all parties signed the Standards of Apprenticeship for K-12 teachers for Hawai'i.

Dr. Higa is well suited to serve as Interim Executive Director for the Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board and has agreed to take the position on an interim basis. Her resumé is attached.

Cost:
All costs are included in the current budget.

Submitted by: Dr. Jonathan Gillentine
Referred to: Committee of the Whole

Unapproved

Mitzie Higa, Ed.D.
[redacted]
[redacted] **WK (808) 840-2235**
[redacted]

Education

USC Rossier School of Education (Ed.D. in Educational Leadership K-12 and Higher Ed.- Dissertation focused on Case Studies of Elementary Schools in Hawai`i with Distinct Patterns of Rising Academic Achievement) *2012*

Master of Arts in Teaching with a Specialization in National Board Certified Leadership in Teaching *2007*
National University

Bachelor of Education Degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis in Social Studies *2000*
University of Hawaii at Manoa, *Honolulu, HI*

Associate of Arts in Liberal Arts, *1996*

Honolulu Community College, *Honolulu*, *Hawaii*

Career History & Accomplishments

Licensing Specialist *Jan. 2024 present*
Hawaii Teacher Standards Board

Government Relations Specialist *2017-23*
Hawaii State Teachers Association

National Board Certified Teacher *2007- 17*
- Middle Childhood Generalist- Social Studies/Science/Math/Reading/Writing/Art/Health

HIDOE: Curriculum Coordinator/ELL Coordinator 2012-17
Ewa Makai Middle School, *91-6291 Kapolei Parkway*, *Ewa Beach*, *HI 96707*

HIDOE: Teacher, *Holomua Elementary School, 91-1561 Keaunui Dr., Ewa Beach, HI 96707* 2000-12
- 5th grade teacher for 8 years
- Kindergarten teacher for 3 years
- Technology Coordinator for 1 year

Lecturer/Adjunct Professor, 2008-09
University of Hawai`i West Oahu
EDEE 425 Social Studies Methods I

EDEE 435 Social Studies Methods II
EDEE 310 Education in a Global Society
EDEE 445 Science Methods I
EDEE 455 Science Methods II
SPED 405 Students with Special Needs
Practicum supervisor of UHWO teacher candidates

Memberships & Affiliations

- Commissioner on the 2010 Hawaii PSRC (Hawaii Performance Standards Review Commission)
- UHWO Education Division Advisory Council (2011- 2022)
- Chairperson- SCC (School Community Council) 2006
- Participant in the SVPDP and We the People (School Violence Demonstration Project-10 years)

Summary

- Licensing Specialist assigned as Legislative liaison, CTE Committee liaison, and Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program Coordinator
- Collaboratively wrote with the National Center for Grow Your Own, the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and received an award of the SAEF grant, for 4.9 million, to HTSB, as the Sponsor, and DLIR from the Federal Department of Labor to fund the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program for K-12 teachers.
- Staff liaison for Special Education Committee between HSTA and HIDOE
- Staff liaison and former member of HSTA Government Relations Committee
- Member of a three-year multi-state-led collaborative effort to develop the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. I served on the C3 Framework **Teacher Collaborative Council** and on the **C3 Editorial Committee** in the development of the C3 Framework. C3 Framework Editorial Committee consisted of state collaborative members and teachers who provided additional guidance to the writing team to ensure effective individual state implementation of the Framework. We provided guidance on grade-level appropriateness, wording, and alignment, and helped with the progression of standards K-12.
- Led (with Dr. Jacquelin Carroll) professional development workshop and support for teachers in the Leeward District seeking National Board Certification through INPEACE-Hawai`i (2010-11 and 2014-15)
- Mentor for teacher candidates (O/P students from Chaminade -1 year and U.H. West O`ahu- 2 years, as well as probationary teachers- 3 years)
- Formed a connection between the UHWO and Holomua Elementary to provide math tutors (10 college students tutored the elementary students in our Math Lab as part of their Service Learning Project) (2009)
- Member of School Leadership Committee (2011-2017), Literacy

Committee (6 yrs), Math/Science Committee (2yrs), Student Services Committee (2yrs) and Technology Committee (1yr)

- Recipient of the Veteran of Foreign Wars' Teacher Citizenship Award for the state of Hawai`i (2009)
- Co-Author of "Schools our Keiki Deserve" report (2016)
- Presenter at HERA Conference, "A Closer Examination of Resource Allocations Using Research Based Best Practices to Promote Student Learning" (2012)
- Presenter with former students at NIEA (National Indian Education Association) conference on the School Violence Prevention Demonstration Project (SVPDP) and We the People (2007)
- Presenter at International Reading Association National Conference on the Standards-Based Change Process (Chicago- 2006)
- One out of 200 teachers across the nation chosen to attend the Mickelson ExxonMobil Teachers Academy (Science/Math) in New Jersey at the Liberty Science Center (2011)
- One out of 50 teachers chosen to attend the Elementary Advanced Seminar at Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania (2010); The We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Summer Institute for Upper Elementary Teachers at James Madison University in Virginia (2009); The Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama by the Center for Civics Education (2008), all sponsored by the Center for Civics Education, We the People, and the U.S. Department of Education
- Teacher of ECELL (Electronic Collaborative Educational Learning Laboratory) (Summer 2000)

References:

Jackie Carroll (now retired)
INPEACE Kūkuluao & Ka Lama Education Academy
86-088 Farrington Highway Suite 107
Mailing address: P.O. Box 4218, Wai'anae HI 96792
carroll2@hawaiiantel.net
(808) 737-5657

Rosanna Fukuda
HIDOE, OCISS, Social Studies Specialist
rpfukuda@gmail.com
808-741-8455

Tracey Idica
Hawai'i Teacher Standards Board
Tracey.Idica@hawaii.gov
808-784-5588