



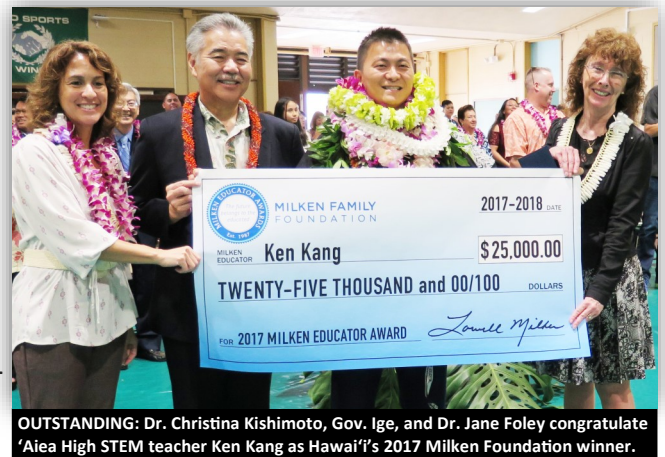
Courtesy Tyler Kruse

From the governor: Education, the key to the state’s future

School loyalties run deep in Hawai‘i — from small-kid time to the University of Hawai‘i system. As a proud graduate of Pearl City High School and UH Mānoa, Governor Ige has made education a top priority throughout his legislative career and now as governor. This issue of Capitol Connection highlights some of the progress and investments we’re making in this critical piece of the state’s future.

Q. Why have you made education one of your top priorities and how does that build on what you tried to achieve as a legislator?

A. I’ve always believed our schools are the foundation of our community. The strength of our state’s economy depends on the quality of public education and the opportunities we create in the workforce. When I was House Education Chair in the Legislature, Sen. Mike McCartney and I introduced an omnibus education bill in 1993 that became law, giving public schools more control over their own resources and encouraging innovation. It was considered a landmark piece of legislation because it provided schools with more of the tools they needed to improve. Now, with **Hawai‘i’s Blueprint for Education** and our new DOE superintendent, Dr. Christina Kishimoto, we’re refocusing on empowering schools in a grassroots way.



OUTSTANDING: Dr. Christina Kishimoto, Gov. Ige, and Dr. Jane Foley congratulate ‘Aiea High STEM teacher Ken Kang as Hawai‘i’s 2017 Milken Foundation winner.

Q. What education accomplishments are you proudest of so far in your administration? What budget items are being requested?

A. Much of what we’ve done has been to improve student learning and expand opportunities for college and careers. **Cooling more than 1,200 of our hottest classrooms** was a promise we delivered on, thanks to support from the Legislature and energy-efficient strategies from the DOE. I got involved with the negotiations for a **new four-year teachers’ contract and pay raises** because it was a way to let them know their commitment to their students and communities was appreciated. My **budget requests this session** include more funds to help schools close the achievement gap, expand **Early College** in the high schools and provide more funds for the **Hawai‘i Promise** scholarships for UH community college students. A large share of the state’s **capital improvement funds** is earmarked for projects to improve public school and UH facilities statewide. And we’ve also requested funds for the **Hawai‘i Keiki** program for school-based health services, the **Farm to School** program and Sen. Michelle Kidani’s **“Grow our Own Teachers”** initiative.

Q. What are some of your main concerns regarding school safety and preventing gun violence?

A. I’m proud of our students who are lending their voices to issues of safety and security on school campuses. We’re working with law enforcement officials, the Board of Education and Superintendent Kishimoto to review school safety plans. Hawai‘i already has a zero tolerance policy for weapons on campus and some of the strictest gun laws in the nation.

Q. What were some of the biggest issues discussed at the 2018 National Governors conference in Washington, D.C. ?

A. School safety and preventing gun violence were big topics, but it remains to be seen what may be done at the federal level. It’s clear the president believes the governors and states will lead. However, I don’t agree with the president about arming teachers. Teachers are there, first and foremost, to help our children learn. A lot of my time in Washington involved meeting with agency officials about dramatic federal budget cuts for housing, homelessness and the environment. The governors were also concerned about proposed cuts for maintaining highways. The general consensus among the governors is that, although the Trump administration can propose these reductions, Congress can moderate them.

Hawai'i says 'NO MORE' to assault and violence

The numbers are chilling: 500 domestic violence and sexual assault survivors seek help every day in Hawai'i. To drive home the point, the governor joined with the **Hawai'i Says NO MORE coalition** and the **Women's Legislative Caucus** to raise awareness of the crisis throughout the state.

Hawai'i says NO MORE is part of a national movement to end the violence and help victims find support. "These are our relatives, neighbors and friends, not just statistics," said the governor. "They deserve to be heard and protected."



TEAMWORK: Community leaders and women legislators work to end domestic violence.

#NeverAgain: The state's students call for safer schools



Students send 'love and prayers' for Florida shooting victims.

Governor Ige returned to his alma mater, Pearl City High School, March 14 to show his support for students who joined the nationwide 17-minute walkout to honor those who lost their lives in the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Students across the state and the nation called for safer schools and an end to gun violence.

"I'm proud of our students for their leadership," he said. "They can and will make a difference in increasing school safety and preventing gun violence." He told the students that the tragedy is changing the country and that "the change begins with each and every one of them."

Award-winning teachers help students dream big

On a bigger stage, Hawai'i's teachers can compete with the best. The truth of that came through loud and clear in recent months as three of the state's outstanding teachers received national and international recognition for their work with students. They include **Waialua High's Glenn Lee**, who helped spur Hawai'i's robotics movement. Lee was the only American to reach the top 10 as a finalist out of 30,000 entries from 173 countries for the **\$1 million Global Teacher Prize** from the **Varkey Foundation**. The award is intended to elevate the role of teachers in society. Lee launched the state's first organized robotics program in 1999 and has helped students from the small plantation town dream big — aspiring to engineering and other professional careers.

Stevenson Middle School's Patricia Morgan won a **\$100,000 grant from Farmers Insurance** to develop an Imaginarium, a dedicated learning space for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Morgan is one of only five teachers nationwide and the first ever from Hawai'i to receive the prize. The project will connect feeder elementary schools and nearby Roosevelt High School as students collaborate on engineering design, coding and computer mentoring.

'Aiea High's Ken Kang received the prestigious Milken Educator Award — called the "Oscars of teaching" — and \$25,000 for his work with students and teachers in STEM courses and as the school's technology guru. He is an 'Aiea grad and former electrical engineer who helps the seven schools in the 'Aiea complex improve their communication systems and computer software.

Growing our own heroes - Two campaigns to tackle Hawai'i's teacher shortage are underway to highlight the rewards of the classroom and to help local talent earn teaching credentials. The **"Grow Our Own Teachers"** pilot program, introduced by Sen. Michelle Kidani and supported by Governor Ige, is a partnership between the DOE and UH. The program provides scholarships to DOE employees who are emergency hires, substitute teachers or educational assistants so they can earn statewide teaching certification from the UH College of Education in grades 6 to 12.

The second is a multi-media campaign called **"Be a hero. Be a teacher"** that shows the pathways available to gain teaching credentials at UH Mānoa, UH Hilo, UH West O'ahu and Leeward Community College. The campaign was developed by educators from the four campuses who worked with Kai Media and Marketing. For more details, go to <https://coe.hawaii.edu/node/4507> for the "Grow Our Own" initiative or www.beaherobeateacher.com for "Be a Hero."



WINNERS: (from top) Waialua's Glenn Lee, Stevenson's Patricia Morgan and 'Aiea's Ken Kang with Gov. Ige.

DOE's superintendent: Vision-driven to empower schools

During her first eight months on the job, **DOE Superintendent Christina Kishimoto** has become one of the public schools' biggest cheerleaders. She's visited all 15 district complexes, talks with pride about the uniqueness of each community, and tweets regularly about the "fantastic things" happening across the state.

But she's also on a mission to change what has been described as a "top-down, one-size-fits-all" mindset — a concern she says was voiced by many of the more than 100 community members she met during her hiring process. She recalls people asking, "**How would you implement the empowerment we want to see in our school system?**"



Gov. Ige and Dr. Kishimoto confer on progress statewide.

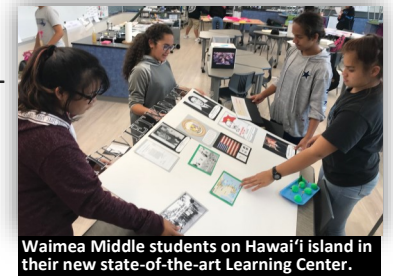


Milliani High students with Dr. Kishimoto at the Legislature.

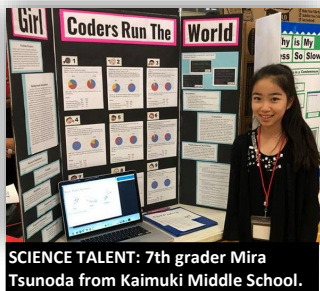
During a recent *Capitol Connection* interview, Dr. Kishimoto discussed everything from **school safety to new Innovation Grants** and her determination to change the relationship between the schools and the DOE central office from "**permission-seeking to site-based innovation.**" To encourage schools to come up with creative ways to address complex issues, the DOE is offering Innovation Grants for schools statewide — the first time it is awarding such funding. "What was centralized before, we're now pushing into the schools," explained Dr. Kishimoto. "The idea is to fund some diverse pilot projects." Priority was given to proposals that **increase student learning, close the achievement gap, increase college enrollment and improve teacher retention**, among other areas.

"One school wanted to create an alternative pathway for kids who are not engaging in traditional high school. Others wanted to do STEM-focused and project-based learning. The grants also let us talk about how you do this with your core funds (through the **Student Weighted Formula** created in the 1993 legislation by then-House Education Chair David Ige to direct more resources to the schools). It's about changing core practices with new ideas," Kishimoto said.

"**I keep finding impressive things** when I visit the schools," she said of visits to **Waialua Intermediate and High's** award-winning robotics program and **Maui High's** career and technical education projects, such as their visual arts courses and a "tiny house" students were designing and building. The new superintendent's school visits reinforced her belief that a strong school system encourages creative thinking, new ideas and diverse, locally tailored ways to help students find success. "Our conversations have been more like coaching. **Schools don't have to come to me for permission to try things,**" she said. "We need to talk more about our **diverse school models.** I don't have one description of my schools. There are common elements: the curriculum has to be rigorous and all kids have to be engaged. There needs to be quality teacher training, and parents and the community need to be involved. But beyond that, schools can decide what the components of that experience are."



Waimea Middle students on Hawai'i island in their new state-of-the-art Learning Center.



SCIENCE TALENT: 7th grader Mira Tsunoda from Kaimuki Middle School.

She said she agrees with Governor Ige that we need to create a **seamless path** to connect students to college and career programs such as **Early College** and **STEM-related** activities that can lead to **higher-paying jobs in the future.** She also maintains that Hawai'i has "tremendous potential" to create a public school system that's noted nationally. "We have a rich history of communities supporting their schools," she said. "We also have a real appreciation of **multi-language learning and culture** that we haven't maximized yet." Dr. Kishimoto said in addition to required standardized tests and traditional measures, Hawai'i is one of a handful of states that have volunteered to **pilot alternative assessments and competency-based learning** as a way to measure student progress. "We would ask, '**What does student success look like?**' It would be great to be a **leader nationally for this kind of thinking.**"

MORE PRIORITY AREAS:

- **School safety and security** - "I'm moved to see students organizing about school safety issues. We have safety plans at all our schools, which are being reviewed to identify the highest needs of different campuses. Also, following our HPD press conference, there was an immediate decrease in hoaxes and school threats. Now there's an awareness that a person could end up with a (criminal) record, even for a prank."
- **School design and student voice** - "What's exciting is principals are taking advantage of the empowerment structure we've set up to design at a very local level. I'm asking 'What's special about your school? What are your community resources? How do we design schools around what students say is impactful?'"
- **Teacher recruitment** - "We want to see more future teachers in the pipeline. We're also rolling out a guaranteed mentoring program as part of teacher retention. Also, our special ed teachers say they need more support, so that's a flaw we're going to fix."



THE BEST: Statewide 2018 Teacher of the Year nominees.

Public schools, UH and local talent fuel the state's future

If you're feeling cynical about Hawai'i's future, here's an antidote: Spend some time with a couple of young people like **Renzee Reyes** and **Christopher Nguyen** — two proud public school and University of Hawai'i graduates who, like others, have found a way to carve out 21st century careers and build impressive resumes. Both majored in computer science at UH

Mānoa and praised the education they received there to prepare them for "real-world" jobs. Both credit the teachers they had in high school — **Renzee at Mililani** and **Christopher at Farrington** — for setting them on a path to success. What stands out is how each found ways to combine a love for the islands with job opportunities to benefit the people of our state.

When Governor Ige talks about creating Hawai'i tech jobs for the next generation, he has in mind young people like Renzee Reyes. After graduating from UH two years ago with his computer science degree, Reyes, 25, could have gone anywhere. "The mainland was an option, but I knew I wanted to start my career in Hawai'i," he said, "and work toward an advanced degree."



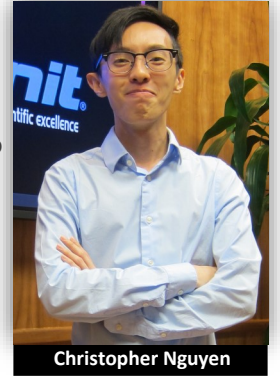
Renzee Reyes

That's when he found a 21st century solution. As a data analyst for **MDX Hawai'i**, a local health care company, Reyes has the best of several worlds. He's applying his tech expertise to the high-demand field of health care in Hawai'i while pursuing a master's in data science online from UC Berkeley. He's even able to work remotely from his home on O'ahu's west side.

"MDX has been really good about letting me flex some hours while I pursue my master's," Reyes said. "My job involves developing software, data analysis and doing what I learned at UH. I'm also able to apply what I'm studying for my master's to real-world issues. It's a powerful combination."

Reyes said at Mililani High he chose a career pathway that mixed computer skills with the creative process. Now at MDX, he said, "I get to work on both the technical and design sides." It's this creative and critical thinking process, not just punching numbers, that Reyes sees as the promise of STEM. "Coding breaks something down into logical steps to achieve a goal. That kind of skill applies everywhere," he said. "I hope we can do more to connect UH grads to **careers in Hawai'i.**"

Christopher Nguyen, 21, admits being raised in public housing could have led him down the wrong path. That it didn't is a tribute to his immigrant parents, his own determination and the teachers who helped him excel in STEM fields.



Christopher Nguyen

"My parents really believed that education is opportunity so I never let myself be defined by "at risk" stereotypes," he said. "I had big dreams and wanted to create my own future." To read his resume, that would be an understatement. Nguyen said his high school robotics, science fair and other STEM activities helped him win enough scholarships to cover his college education.

He said he was accepted for admission to the University of Southern California, but his dad was diagnosed with cancer so he decided to attend UH Mānoa instead. But far from being a consolation prize, Nguyen parlayed his UH home base into a launching pad for internships locally and on the mainland.

His resume includes three stints at **Oceanit**, a Hawai'i-based global engineering and innovation company; a summer **IBM** internship in California; and a **NASA Space Grant** fellowship to research 'cold traps' on the moon. His UH team also took first place at the **Governor's 2017 Code Challenge** for creating an app and map to pinpoint UH Mānoa campus locations.

After Nguyen graduates this spring, he's looking forward to working at a large tech company, then coming back to the islands to teach. As for encouraging other students, he advised, "You can create your own future. No matter where you start in life, you can make success happen if you're **motivated enough.**"

Another local boy's story . . . "Education is the key to a better life" was the message

Governor Ige and his five brothers heard from his parents. His dad's formal education stopped at the 8th grade on Ewa Plantation; Tokio Ige expected his sons to aim higher. The governor was prime college material: president of his senior class and a student body vice president. But as the fifth of six sons, the governor was worried about costs. Two of his brothers had already gone to mainland schools, and his younger brother was thinking about college, too. When the governor received his acceptance to the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** — one of the most prestigious schools in the country — he didn't tell his parents. "I knew they would have sacrificed to send me there, but it would have been a huge burden." So the governor chose the **University of Hawai'i** for his engineering degree and master's in business administration. "I've always felt that going to a more 'prestigious' school doesn't make you a better person," he said. **"Making the most of your opportunities determines the quality of your education."**



Gov. Ige Class of '75

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