

Senator Michelle Kidani

Twenty-eighth Hawaii State Legislature

(D) Senate District 18 – Serving Mililani Town, Waipio Gentry, Waikele, Village Park, Royal Kunia

Teachers are reporting to their respective classrooms this week, and students will follow in a few days. I can think of no more appropriate time for a renewed focus on public education.

Earlier this month, more than a thousand residents from across the state attended an all-day forum at the Hawaii Convention Center. The session was part of the public outreach effort by Governor Ige's team of 19 volunteer advisors charged with developing a blueprint for refocusing the way instruction is provided for our public school students.

The focus of the Team and the summit is new federal legislation – the *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* – that shifts greater responsibility for student success and leadership accountability away from federally-mandated standards to the state level.

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, I serve on the Governor's ESSA Team which has been meeting in all day sessions almost every other Saturday. I am pleased that the Department of Education, the Board of Education and the ESSA Team are reaching out to provide further opportunities for public input.

Here's the information from the DOE:

The Hawaii State Department of Education (DOE) and Board of Education (BOE) have scheduled a series of community meetings to provide updates on plans to better public education. These meetings are part of the ongoing outreach effort in the updating of the Strategic Plan.

Student success is at the core of the DOE/BOE Strategic Plan, which sets targets for progress tied to three goals. Earlier this year, the DOE/BOE embarked on a review and extension of the plan.

“We have sought input from students, teachers, school leaders, parents, employers and community members and their feedback is an important component as we move forward,” said Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi. “Additionally, we are reviewing our student data, and the output of the Governor's team on the Every Student Succeeds Act. Based on the collective feedback, we will develop new strategies to support student success.”

“A lot of work has been done and we want to share this information with our school communities and education stakeholders,” added BOE Chairman Lance Mizumoto. “We encourage anyone interested in public education to attend our meetings to learn about our efforts.”

Staff from DOE will be collecting community members' perspectives on the draft Strategic Plan priorities, which will also be used to inform the Plan's review and extension.

The Governor's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Team is also sharing information about new opportunities under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act. Hawaii's state plan for ESSA will be informed by the Strategic Plan.

I invited **Lee Posey, an education policy expert from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)**, to present a legislative perspective at the Governor's ESSA Team summit. The following week, I accompanied Ms. Posey on a round of Town Hall meetings in Hilo, Wailuku and Kapa'a to discuss ESSA with neighbor island audiences. You'll find photos and comment from our tour below.



Keaukaha Elementary



Hilo High

Our **ESSA Town Hall** itinerary on three neighbor islands provided a valuable opportunity to visit school campuses that are truly inspirational in the ways they educate our youngsters. *Above left*, a stop at **Keaukaha Elementary** on Hawaii Island: Education Committee staff **Park Kaleiwahea**, myself, student **Chazz Agpoon**, NCSL education policy advisor **Lee Posey**, student **Aukai Chu-Hing**, my colleague **Senator Kai Kahele**, who represents Hilo, and behind us **Keaukaha Principal Stacey Bello**. We were happy to see Chazz and Aukai again – they had come to Honolulu earlier this year to testify at the Capitol on a resolution requesting equipment for their cafeteria. *Above right*, Lee presents her overview of the **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)** to the audience that included involved teachers and community residents at **Hilo High**.

My colleagues Maui Senators **Roz Baker** and **Gilbert Keith-Agaran** joined us for the presentations and discussion at our ESSA Town Hall meeting at **Baldwin High** (*below*). A big *mahalo* to Principal **Catherine Kilborne** for hosting us!



Kamali'i Elementary



Maui High

On Maui, **Kamali'i Elementary School Principal Kim Mukai-Otani** (*above left*) took Lee and me to visit the Media and the Library/Reading centers where the school's **Read-to-Succeed** program is nationally recognized. *Above right*, a meeting with **Maui High Principal Bruce Anderson** and his **Vice Principal Francoise Wittenburg**. They told Lee, me and ESSA volunteer Susan Kitsu, (to my left) of successes and challenges he and his teachers and staff encounter.



Baldwin High School



Waimea High

On tour on Kauai, **Waimea High Principal Mahina Anguay**, **DOE Principal of the Year** (*at left*) showed off Waimea's on-campus aquaculture facilities.



Kapa'a High

At **Wilcox Elementary**, *at right*, Assistant DOE Superintendent **Clyde Sonobe**, Kauai Representative **James Tokioka**, Principal **Corey Nakamura**, Vice Principal **Ray Carvalho**, and Senate President **Ron Kouchi** with Lee and myself.



Wilcox Elementary School

There was a good turnout at **Kapa'a High** where Lee and I discussed ESSA and engaged attendees to hear their concerns and ideas – a very successful conclusion to our three-island neighbor island visits.

As the huge turnout for the ESSA Summit this month has demonstrated, there is high interest in supporting our public schools. Mahalo to ESSA volunteer and former DOE employee Susan Kitsu and the Hawaii State Teachers Association for kokua in organizing our neighbor island Town Hall program.

You can learn more about the Governor's ESSA Team's activities online at:
<http://governor.hawaii.gov/essa-team/>.

The DOE has posted the current schedule for upcoming BOE and Governor ESSA Team community meetings at:

<http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/VisionForSuccess/AdvancingEducation/StrategicPlan/Pages/Community-Meetings.aspx>.

Please participate; it's important to the success of our schools, our communities