



MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani
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Focus on public education

Earlier this month, more than a thousand residents from across the state attended an all-day education 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 summit's focal point was 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. The conference was an inspiring indicator of widespread public interest in improving public school instruction by empowering the Department of Education, principals and teachers to meet our students' needs in the most appropriate ways to ensure they are able to meet life and career goals.



The Governor's ESSA Team ~ working to re-direct Hawaii's public education system.

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, I serve on the Governor's ESSA Team. I invited Lee Posey, an education policy expert from the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), to present a legislative perspective at the summit. Then last week I accompanied Ms. Posey to a round of Town Hall community meetings in Hilo, Wailuku and Kapa`a to discuss ESSA with neighbor island audiences. There will be many other opportunities for public input for the ESSA Team to consider as we formulate recommendations and a plan of action for the Governor and the DOE, and we invite your participation.

Mililani High School history teacher Amy Perruso serves on the ESSA Team, as do Brennan Lee – MHS Class of 2016 outgoing student representative on the Board of Education, and Waipahu High School's innovative Principal Keith Hayashi. We are all hopeful that the flexibility in the new law will be an incentive for the DOE to more formally recognize that principals and teachers can best judge what's needed for their students and campus communities.

The Team and the DOE plan to submit an initial report to the Board of Education in November, and the Board will then schedule public meetings and other opportunities for public comment. You can learn more about the ESSA Team's agenda over the next several months – including minutes from the Team's regular meetings – by going online: <http://governor.hawaii.gov/essa-team/>.

Please participate; it's important to the future of our schools, our communities and our future leaders.

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Mahalo to Student Representatives on the Board of Education

How fortunate we are to have bright and capable students willing to step forward to provide a student voice at the Board of Education meetings. During the school year just ended, Mililani High School senior **Brennan Lee**, as noted above, served on the Board. We are grateful for his service, and note that his replacement will be a member of the Waipahu High School Class of 2017 – **Andrea Lyn Mateo**. She was chosen from a pool of a half-dozen applicants, all highly qualified. In his farewell memorandum to the Board, Brennan said: “There is no doubt: Andrea Lyn will be an amazing member of the BOE. Her accolades are remarkable, her personality is likable, and her drive and determination is notable.” Thank you both for your service!



Mahalo to Brennan Lee, Mililani Class of 2016 - outgoing Student Representative to the Board of Education - and to his successor in the new school year - Andrea Lyn Mateo, Waipahu High Class of 2017.