



# MidWeek

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## *In praise of good teachers*

Those of us who were invited to an end-of-the-month awards assembly at Waipahu High School a couple of weeks ago were sworn to secrecy. We were told by WHS Principal Keith Hayashi, “You must attend.” Nearly 2,500 Marauder students, teachers and guests, including Governor David Ige and First Lady Dawn Amano Ige, packed the school’s gym – and it was clear that something really big was on the agenda.

The crowd erupted in long and loud applause when longtime and clearly beloved biology teacher **Michael Sana** was announced as this year’s Hawaii winner of the prestigious Milken Educator Award. The honor is often referred to as “the Oscar of teaching,” and includes an unrestricted cash award of \$25,000.

It was an emotional moment for Michael, his fellow teachers, and his devoted science students. I have been a big fan of his outstanding summer research conducted at the prestigious Lawrence Livermore Teacher Academy and the way he has nurtured hundreds of students over the past several years at Waipahu. During the time Mr. Sana has taught Advanced Placement science classes there, enrollment has risen dramatically with many of his students doing extremely well in state and national science competitions. Dozens of them have earned scholarships and grants for their science studies and have continued their good work well beyond high school. We are so proud of this distinction for Waipahu High, one of Hawaii’s legacy schools that serves our families in this part of Oahu so well.



***Waipahu High science teacher Michael Sana accepts congratulations from students and faculty—and Hawaii’s First Lady Dawn Amano Ige—as this year’s Milken Foundation Educator.***

***Michael spends a part of his summers at the prestigious Lawrence Livermore Labs in California.***



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Just a few days after the Waipahu assembly, I had the opportunity to congratulate still more teachers who worked hard to earn certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. They include **Corey Yasuda**, a kindergarten teacher at Kaleiopu`u Elementary School in Village Park. In my remarks to this year's certified teachers, I noted our great appreciation for their commitment to teaching excellence in the classroom.

***Congratulations to Kaleiopu`u Elementary School kindergarten teacher Corey Yasuda for completing the work to meet certification requirements of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.***



Parents and peers are the biggest influences on our youngsters in shaping the way they see the world and interact with others. But next to that, I'm sure all of us can think of a favorite teacher along the way who made a difference. We are grateful to Michael Sana, Corey Yasuda and the thousands of other Hawaii teachers who devote their days – and many nighttime hours – to this most honorable profession.

**Legislative session proceeding**

At this point in mid-February, we lawmakers have completed about a third of the 2016 legislative session. Bills that are still under active consideration are being sent to second committees for additional testimony and debate. The Senate and House budget committees continue to review state agency requests for funding as they weigh high priority needs against available resources.

As Chair of the Senate Committee on Education, my goal is to guide proposed legislation through the process that will focus those resources most effectively to the benefit of teachers and their students. That's a truly important way to help our youngsters take advantage of opportunities to learn and grow to the benefit of our communities. Good teachers who nurture student success in their daily work inspire us to be creative in our approaches to lawmaking.