



MidWeek

This column by Senator Michelle Kidani was published in MidWeek’s Central Oahu VOICE section on Wednesday, August 12, 2015.

A new school year!

Families of school-aged youngsters are adjusting their schedules once again as the new school year gets underway. I know that’s the case in my own family as my grandchildren return to their respective campuses.

As the summer break drew to a close, I had the opportunity to tour the wonderful new classroom building at Schofield’s Hale Kula Elementary and the State’s newest elementary school campus in West Oahu. Our Mililani neighbor, **Jan Iwase**, is Principal at Hale Kula. Under her leadership over the past several years, Jan has developed an academic and activity program that has won national recognition for her teachers and students, and the huge campus renovation and expansion program will go a long way to support success for many years to come.



On tour at the new classroom facilities at Hale Kula Elementary. Open learning environments encourage team teaching and collaborative learning.

The State’s newest public school – Ho`okele Elementary in Kapolei – opened for its very first students this school year. Ground was broken at the campus site just 15 months ago; construction was completed on time and on budget using the “design-build” process. That concept allocates all funding associated with the project up-front with the contractor responsible start-to-finish for design through construction. This is the

first time the Department of Education has used this construction method, and we’re happy to learn that more projects using this technique are in the works to help the DOE save money and time.

Following a tour of the Ho`okele campus, the Board of Education held its regular business meeting at the school. I was so proud to meet and congratulate the Board’s student member for the 2015-2016 school year – Mililani High School senior **Brennan Lee**. Brennan is on the MHS Student Council, plays in the Concert Band, and is an accomplished student athlete. He’ll lend an important student perspective to Board discussions over the next several months. Congratulations, Brennan!



At left, Student member of the Hawaii State Board of Education ~ Mililani High School senior Brennan Lee.

At right, Mililani resident Amy Yonashiro ~ `Iolani School math teacher.



One more school note – mahalo to MidWeek for profiling Mililani resident **Amy Yonashiro** in a recent article. Amy is a longtime math teacher at `Iolani who has been invited to Washington, D.C., to receive a [continued]

Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching at the White House. Amy credits her colleagues and student support for her success. The citation includes a cash award from the National Science Foundation – well-deserved recognition for one of our distinguished Mililani neighbors!

State offers low-interest solar energy loans

The Legislature in 2014 established a program to help residents install renewable energy producing equipment at their homes with low-interest loans from the state. The Hawaii Energy Office has announced that loan applications are now being accepted from residents seeking to finance solar photovoltaic systems under the state's Green Energy Market Securitization (GEMS) program. GEMS is aimed at consumers who want to install PV systems, but cannot afford the high upfront costs or do not qualify for traditional financing. Twenty-year fixed-rate loans are available for the purchase of a PV system installed at a single-family residence within the service areas of the Hawaiian Electric Companies. You can find out more and apply for the loans online at gems.hawaii.gov.