School Design. Teacher Collaboration. Student Voice. These highly discussed topics are known as the three high-impact strategies to strengthen our public education system here in the HIDOE, referenced in the 2030 Promise Plan. Student voice is about providing students with the opportunity to develop an authentic voice to advocate for themselves and their educational experience.

As a fully self-contained special education teacher, I find myself questioning not if this promise plan applies to my students, but how it will be applied. This is what special education teachers are all about. How do we take the norm and apply it to an area where things do not seem “normal”?

My question to special education teachers is: How do you encourage, activate, and develop authentic student voice for the voiceless?

My classroom is a beautiful world of bright, talented, and sophisticated young men and women. One target in my classroom is for all students to self-advocate for themselves and their educational experience. This includes students who have functional communication skills, students who are non-verbal, students who script, and students who choose for their preferred communication method to be through the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device.

Please see Voice, Page 2

#PublicSchoolProud

ALUMNI

Kari Odo

Special education teacher Derek Govin teaches in a fully self-contained classroom at Roosevelt High School, where he’s taught the past three years. Above, Govin receives a high-five from one of his students, Marie.

Please see OSSS, Page 3

While the Office of Student Support Services (OSSS) is a relatively new standalone office, its underlying mission has long been a fundamental aspect of HIDOE’s commitment to equity and access for all students. A year and a half ago, Superintendent Christina Kishimoto initiated a realignment of state-level offices, and the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Student Support was reorganized into two offices – the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Design and OSSS. This move reflected the state’s intention to bring greater focus to the two driving and overlapping areas of student growth: academics and behaviors. OSSS is responsible for

Please see OSSS, Page 3

W

Editorial Mission

Hawai‘i’s public school system plays an integral role in the Islands as the state’s largest education provider. As the Department’s primary publication, we aim to live up to the meaning of ha‘aheo — to cherish with pride — by bolstering and sustaining pride in public education and touting the successes happening across the system as we deliver on the power and promise of public education.

At Haha‘ione Elementary School, teachers provide many experiences to support all of our students through their journey of wonder and discovery. And I mean all of our students. Students with all types of different abilities, cultures, and backgrounds are invited into our classrooms to participate in a meaningful and inclusive way. As a special education teacher, I am proud of the environment that our school community creates, which makes every child and adult feel like they belong. Our students will grow up to see everyone as equals, regardless of their differences.

Kari Odo is a special education resource teacher at Haha‘ione Elementary. She was awarded the 2018-19 Teacher of Promise Award from the National Milken Educators of Hawai‘i, and is a Kalani High School graduate.

A voice for the voiceless

Special education teacher strives to help students develop authentic voice

Hawaii’s public school system plays an integral role in the Islands as the state’s largest education provider. As the Department’s primary publication, we aim to live up to the meaning of ha‘aheo — to cherish with pride — by bolstering and sustaining pride in public education and touting the successes happening across the system as we deliver on the power and promise of public education.

At Haha‘ione Elementary School, teachers provide many experiences to support all of our students through their journey of wonder and discovery. And I mean all of our students. Students with all types of different abilities, cultures, and backgrounds are invited into our classrooms to participate in a meaningful and inclusive way. As a special education teacher, I am proud of the environment that our school community creates, which makes every child and adult feel like they belong. Our students will grow up to see everyone as equals, regardless of their differences.

Kari Odo is a special education resource teacher at Haha‘ione Elementary. She was awarded the 2018-19 Teacher of Promise Award from the National Milken Educators of Hawai‘i, and is a Kalani High School graduate.
HIDOE’s Leadership Institute recently awarded nearly $500,000 in innovation grants to support dozens of creative projects aimed at boosting student achievement and success. The funding will support 53 proposals that span all grade levels and islands, with projects ranging from makerspaces and STEM labs to literacy initiatives.

Grant winners will spend the spring semester implementing their projects. Among the awards are two projects that involve supporting students with special needs and the broader disabled community.

Stevenson Middle School STEM teacher Trish Morgan was awarded a $10,000 innovation grant to support the school’s Assistive Technology Academy. “The most exciting thing about innovation is the ability for students to build empathy for others and apply creative problem-solving skills to strengthen the community in a compassionate way. Students thrive on other students’ success and we want to keep the momentum going,” Morgan said.

The idea for the Assistive Technology Academy came from the success of previous student projects under Morgan, including a 3D-printed prosthetic arm, 3D-printed fingers for a student, and a wearable sensor for the blind. “With technology breakthroughs and open-source programming kits and electronic development boards, student inventors have the tools and the power to transform lives,” she said. “Through the innovation grant program, we are able to purchase tools to create an (artificial intelligence) system to detect skin cancer, improve the function of 3D-printed fingers and build a flexible stand-up wheelchair for a student with muscular dystrophy. We are grateful for the support and the chance to take our program to the next level.”

Meanwhile, Thomas Graham, a teacher at the Hawai‘i School for the Deaf and the Blind (HSDB), secured a $3,900 innovation grant for his proposal to expand and increase access for deaf students to Hawaiian cultural sites. In his proposal, Graham explained that the grant would provide support for HSDB middle school students to learn about, visit and access five Hawaiian cultural sites and five Hawaiian cultural statues on O‘ahu. “Students will present what they learned to their elementary student peers. These presentations will be filmed and made accessible to their high school student peers via QR codes embedded on a large wall map at HSDB,” Graham wrote in his proposal.

**BY THE NUMBERS: 2018-19 school year.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education/Needs Students Served</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>*This includes hearing, speech or language, visual, emotional, orthopedic, traumatic brain injury, developmental delay and other health impairments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Specific Learning Disabilities</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Autism</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Health Impairments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Voice**

*Continued from Page 1*

(i.e. iPad using Proloquo2go). My students’ voices are elevated in their opportunities to determine their preferred activities, determining the order of their workload on their daily schedule, and state their desired reward for completing said tasks. In my high school classroom, we all begin our school day with a morning routine. This routine is individualized to every student and adult within the room. Most consist of greeting teacher as the student enters the room, putting away belongings in the respective areas, bathroom and hygiene skills, completing a calendar activity, and preparing for whole-group morning meeting. Morning meeting is a time when student voice is activated for all of my students.

After being inspired by a video of a teacher who greets every student with a greeting of their choice – high-five, dance, or a hug – I knew I must activate my students in allowing them to choose their morning greeting from their teacher as well. Edutopia reports that greeting students at the door sets a positive tone and decreases disruptive behaviors. Academic engagement can be increased by 20% and disruptive behaviors decreased by 9%. My students are greeted one by one with eye contact, a verbal “hello” and, after receiving the same from them, a choice between high-five, dance, or hug.

Student voice is activated by allowing choice through pointing, sign language, AAC communication, or verbal communication. Providing students with different modalities allows them to pick the preferred mode of communication, allowing for authentic student voice in the morning greeting to set a positive tone for his or her day. Communication. Self-advocacy. Problem-solving skills. These are the three most important skills for students with special needs to learn to provide them access to their world.

How does this happen? How do you ensure every student has a voice that not only provides access to school activities, but to their home, community, and everyday life tasks? How is it that we ensure every child has a voice, believes they are valued, and speaks with the intent of being heard?

All voices matter. Yes, even those who take more developing to hear. Listen closely. We all speak.

**Roosevelt High special education teacher Derek Govin works to elevate authentic student voice in his fully self-contained classroom. Above, students Hoku, left, and Clio work on an art activity during class.**

**Derek Govin (@derek_govin) teaches Community Based Instruction at Roosevelt High School. He is a Hawai‘i State Teacher Fellow and a school level mentor. He is passionate about connecting functional academics with life skills to empower individuals with special needs to both gain access to their world, as well as thrive in the most independent manner.**
During the 2020 Grammy Awards in late January, singer-songwriter host Alicia Keys proclaimed, "Music is that one language we can all speak." The Recording Academy itself refers to music as the original melting pot, a blend of beliefs and cultures that makes us move, emote and feel. Music amplifies a message that we're all the same.

Those notions of inclusiveness and harmony can be a powerful tool in educational settings. Just ask Farrington High School English teacher Isabella Barrett. Barrett loves music and over the years has developed a way to weave music into her blended curriculum to better engage students. As a Farrington graduate herself, she utilizes various genres of music and topics to make her lesson plans relevant to her students' lives.

"Although it is a goal of the unit to help students achieve the academic standards, the greater goal is to nurture my students toward maturity and wisdom by cultivating a sense of empathy and compassion for themselves and others," she said of her curriculum. "Students are encouraged to define their identity and discover their purpose in life in the midst of conflict through the inspiration of literature and music."

Music is the universal language. "Music is the great equalizer. Music is the tool in educational settings. Just think about how we can use music and literature recently," Keys proclaimed, "Music is that one language we can all speak." Stonehill said. "Therefore, in an inclusive classroom with different abilities and cultures, music makes it equitable for all students. They can relate and connect their thoughts to learning through music."

Barrett’s innovative blend of music and literature recently earned her national recognition in the music world.

At the same ceremony where Alicia Keys spoke of the power of music, Barrett won the Grammy’s Jane Ortner Education Award, given annually to a K-12 academic teacher who effectively incorporates music in the classroom. Barrett and her curriculum will be inducted into the Grammy Museum.

Barrett said that while the awards show in Los Angeles was an amazing experience and honor, "what is more meaningful to me is that this award shines a positive light on my students at Farrington High School."

"I hope it will ignite a fire in the hearts of my students to pursue their dreams," she added. "I dream that one day my students will bring national attention to the struggles of poverty faced by many Kalihi students to inspire those caught in the struggle to never give up. That is my dream. That is what I hope this award will bring."
The Office of Student Support Services (OSSS) recently welcomed a new director for the Exceptional Support Branch, launched a new website with resources on inclusive education, and established a branch to support a growing demand for alternative learning programs.

NEW DIRECTOR FOR EXCEPTIONAL SUPPORT BRANCH

Annie Kalama has been named director of the Exceptional Support Branch. The branch supports schools and complex areas through the research and development of policies, procedures, guidelines and tools to ensure students with disabilities have a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. Kalama previously served as the administrator of the Special Needs Section and has 30 years of experience in special education. Her firm belief in inclusive opportunities and quality education aligns with HIDOE’s commitment to serving students of all abilities. Kalama replaces Debbie Farmer, who after 34 years of service with HIDOE, retired in December.

NEW INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WEBSITE

As part of HIDOE’s commitment to inclusive opportunities where students with disabilities have equal access to and successfully engage in the same educational environment with the same learning opportunities as their peers, schools are rethinking inclusive education design and are shifting from the mindset of placement to services. This includes various models of support, equitable access for all students, high expectations and evidence-based practices. OSSS has created a dedicated website for inclusive education with resource materials and tools for teachers and administrators: http://bit.ly/HIDOEInclusiveEd.

BRANCH ESTABLISHED FOR ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROGRAMS

New to OSSS is the Alternative Learning Programs Branch, which provides alternative learning opportunities for students who have experienced difficulties in traditional learning environments. The branch, which was established in early 2019, provides statewide support to schools, complex areas and districts for development, maintenance and enhancement of what’s known as Alternative Learning Programs, Services and Supports (ALPSS).

ALPSS provide opportunities for students to be empowered, receive intensive academic, social-emotional and transitional supports embedded with family and community engagement. The branch includes Kristy Nishimura as its director and Jeri Tokumoto as a state office teacher. Nishimura has nearly three decades of experience at the school, district and state level, while Tokumoto has over a decade of experience at the school and district level. Alternative learning opportunities are provided at the school or complex area/district level. For example, Hilo High School’s Lanakila Learning Center runs an alternative learning program that is student-centered with designed experiential learning to meet the unique needs of the 13 students in the program and prepare them for college and career. Olomana School, meanwhile, is the state’s only alternative learning school and intakes students from the Hawai‘i Youth Correctional Facility and Windward District schools. The vision of the school is to provide a high-quality, engaging alternative education that challenges students to succeed. There are approximately 110 students at Olomana this school year.

Supt’s CORNER

Last month’s newsletter detailed the first phase of this plan, which impacts teachers in the shortage areas of special education, hard-to-staff geographic locations and Hawaiian language immersion. While feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, questions have been raised about teachers in other areas and what the Department plans to do to address salaries across the board. Our goal has always been to tackle pay inequity for all teachers; however, we need a starting point, and it made sense to begin with our educators who serve our most vulnerable haumana. We cannot continue to allow the achievement gap to grow. Our special education program must be delivered by our most experienced teachers while we recruit and prepare future teachers to continue this work.

On Jan. 16 the Department presented the second phase of this initiative to the Board of Education. This next step targets salary equity with a plan to provide extra compensation to licensed, tenured teachers while also addressing salary compression.

As the largest producer of talent in the state, we need to make sure we are retaining the top educators who are equipped to prepare our students to become global citizens. We need a bold solution that puts students first. Rethinking the way we approach education also means rethinking the way we show our educators that we value them. Teachers are the foundation of our system and play the most critical role in helping us deliver on the power and promise of public education.