Happy New Year! January often represents a time for goal setting and fresh starts. Heading into 2020 lawmakers will be kicking off a new legislative session and fine-tuning the state budget. With that in mind, our January issue is focused on legislative topics and civic engagement.

Department seeking legislative support to continue addressing persistent teacher shortages

The Hawai‘i State Department of Education (HIDOE) is implementing a bold plan to begin addressing the perennial shortage of qualified teachers in the state.

In November Superintendent Dr. Christina Kishimoto alongside Gov. David Ige, Board of Education Chairwoman Catherine Payne, Hawai‘i State Teacher Association President Corey Rosenlee and HIDOE announced phase 1 of this plan: a pay differential to increase compensation for classroom teachers in areas with the most severe shortages – special education, Hawaiian language immersion programs, and hard-to-staff geographic locations.

The Board voted 7-2 in favor of implementing the differentials beginning Jan. 7. The effective date was scheduled around a crucial period when teachers have the option to transfer to a new position or school.

“We must take positive action now to address the growing gap of qualified educators who provide instruction to our students with the highest needs,” Payne said. “This is the first of several steps we need to take to support our talented educators. It will take strong policy direction from the Board to shift the Department’s trajectory and we appreciate Gov. Ige’s support as we go forward with these efforts.”

In addition to seeking funding during the upcoming legislative session for such recurring needs as student support services, operations and facilities maintenance, Department leadership and its legislative team will be advocating for continued funding for phase 1 until the shortage challenge is addressed, without impacting crucial operational functions at the state, complex and school levels.

“There is no single solution to the teacher staffing challenges we’re seeing nationwide. The difficulties in recruiting qualified teachers for special education, Hawaiian language immersion and hard-to-staff areas have created an equity issue for our most vulnerable students,” Kishimoto said. “We have listened to the feedback of our educators and it’s time for bold action to unleash the promise and power of public education on behalf of our haumana.”

Work is also underway for phase 2 of the strategic initiative. The Department anticipates introducing a subsequent proposal to the Board in January, which will coincide with the release of the results of the independent teacher salary study HIDOE commissioned.

HIDOE employees can visit http://bit.ly/2PYE1JR for a list of frequently asked questions and answers about the salary differentials on the Department’s Intranet.

**Classroom teachers in three shortage areas, including Hawaiian immersion, are eligible for pay differentials.**
Lt. Col. Horace Meek Hickam Elementary School dedicated a new facility designed to boost efforts in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The new two-story building houses a media center, makerspaces, student support services and the administration office.

1SG Samuel K. Solomon Elementary School opened its new two-story, four-building school complex. The campus replaces the former Solomon campus with new state-of-the-art facilities and includes 63 new classrooms, a student support center, two computer labs, an audio/video room, a covered playcourt, cafeteria and administrative offices.

‘Ewa Makai Middle School dedicated a new classroom wing to accommodate approximately 450 sixth-graders from feeder schools ‘Ewa Elementary, ‘Ewa Beach Elementary and Keone’ula Elementary to complete the school’s sixth-to-eighth-grade middle school concept. The new sixth-grade wing adds approximately 54,500 square feet of educational space.

Mahalo to the Legislature and governor for helping to fund capital improvement projects that support our students.
Teacher Voice

What Can One Person Do? Let’s Help Our Haumana Find Out

Last spring students asked me about Greta Thunberg after seeing her posts on social media.

“So, Miss, I get why she’s doing it, but what’s one person gonna do to fix climate change?” a student asked.

The question caught me off guard because it wasn’t part of our lesson for that day. I gave a convoluted answer that was way too academic for practical application, and the kids moved on.

Later, I reflected and, like any teacher, I was ready for them the next day.

Effecting Real Change

“One person, like Thunberg, can start a movement, but it’s the people and organizations that connect to her message that can make real change. How can we connect the message of her movement to our islands? I stepped back, letting the students talk.

In a single class period, students surfaced concerns about trash, microplastics and coral bleaching at Pu’uloa Beach Park and Hau Bush. Ideas were bridged to illegal ghost nets killing turtles, and stories from kupuna about how the reefs used to look or how fishing used to be in ‘Ewa Beach.

‘So Now What?’

“So now what, Miss?” a student shrugged at the end of class. Sometimes when we study things, students think significant change only happens on a national or international level. It’s important for students to understand it is vital that local communities need to make change happen, too.

When it comes to empowering students to use their voice, students need the opportunity to do so publicly. They also need adults to be willing to listen; most teenagers already believe that adults don’t care what they think, and it’s of the utmost importance that we as adults change that narrative if we want students to be civically engaged in our communities.

How that played out at ‘Ilima was through a series of student-driven events that ranged from students participating in rallies and interacting with elected officials to discussing issues on public access television. In March, after finding an Instagram page titled Climate Strike HI (now called the Hawaii Youth Climate Coalition @ thehyc) that is run for Hawai’i students, by Hawai’i students, and encourages civic participation around climate issues, ‘lima students decided to demonstrate at recess to raise awareness among their peers.

In May ‘Ilima students participated in a climate change rally that coincided with the #FridaysForFuture student movement started by Thunberg, and in September students attended the statewide Youth Climate Strike at the state Capitol. A couple of months later ‘Ilima students shared climate change information at an ‘Ewa Neighborhood Board meeting, where they were able to share their thoughts with public officials including the lieutenant governor.

As a teacher, student advocacy and voice regarding climate change found me. I had to do my research too. In the process, I made connections to other organizations that could help grow my teaching practice, and support my students.

Amplify Student Voice

When students ask you, What can one person do? Be ready. Ask them what they care about. Ask them what they want to change in their community. Elevate and amplify their voices, and connect them to organizations doing the work.

That is ultimately how we’ll save the planet.
The Hawai‘i State Legislature convenes in regular session annually on the third Wednesday in January, which this year falls on Jan. 15. The session moves at a fairly quick pace, limited to 60 legislative days when lawmakers convene in their respective chambers, the Senate and House of Representatives. The session is scheduled to adjourn May 7.

During the session one of the primary duties for lawmakers will be to negotiate additions to the state budget for the current fiscal year and next fiscal year, along with debating hundreds of bills on various topics.

**Senate Committee on Education**

Chairwoman Michelle Kidani
Vice Chairwoman Donna Mercado Kim

Members: Sens. Donovan Della Cruz, Dru Kanuha and Kurt Fevella.

The Department’s legislative efforts are led by HIDOE leadership and the Policy, Innovation, Planning and Evaluation (PIPE) Branch, which tracks proposed legislation that stands to impact the public school system.

Of the more than 3,000 bills lawmakers introduced last year, the Department closely monitored 800 bills and provided testimony on 250 bills.

The Legislature handles the high volume of proposed legislation by having subject matter committees vet them first. For the Department, the education committees in the Senate and House play key roles in overseeing education-related measures.

**House Committee on Lower and Higher Education**

Chairman Justin Woodson
Vice Chairman Mark Hashem
Vice Chairman Sean Quinlan

Members: Reps. Lynn DeCoite, Aaron Ling Johanson, Dale Kobayashi, Dee Morikawa, Takashi Ohno, David Tarnas, James Tokioka and Val Okimoto.

**2020 SESSION KEY DATES:**

- **Jan. 15:** Opening Day.
- **Jan. 21:** Governor’s annual State of the State address.
- **Jan. 23:** Last day for lawmakers to introduce bills. After First Reading (vote by the entire House or Senate), bills are assigned committee referrals, specifying which committees must hear and pass a bill for it to advance.
- **Feb. 14:** Deadline for bills referred to more than one committee to move to their final committee in the originating chamber.
- **Feb. 28:** Deadline for bills to emerge from all of their committees in the originating chamber.
- **March 5:** Deadline for bills to pass Third Reading in order to “crossover” to the other chamber. If successful, House bills are sent to the Senate, and Senate bills are sent to the House for further consideration.
- **March 11:** Deadline for Third Reading of the state budget bill in order to crossover to the other chamber.
- **March 20:** Deadline for bills with multiple committee referrals to move to their final committee in the non-originating chamber.
- **April 9:** Deadline for bills to pass Third Reading in their non-originating chamber and cross back to the originating chamber.
- **Also the deadline for originating chamber to disagree with changes made to its bills by the other chamber. When the Senate and House disagree on a bill, members from each chamber can meet in a conference committee to reconcile their differences.**
- **April 29 and 30:** Deadline for submitting non-fiscal bills (4/29) and fiscal bills (4/30) for final reading by both chambers.
- **May 7:** Adjournment. Bills that both chambers have agreed to will be transmitted to the governor for consideration to become law.

**Supt’s CORNER**

As we convene for the 30th Hawai‘i State Legislature and ready ourselves to deliberate pressing policy matters impacting the future of our island home, I’m excited to announce a deeper student engagement event focused on civic voice.

In preparing students for college, career and community, it’s crucial that we equip students with opportunities for thoughtful civic engagement to prepare and empower them as major contributors to a viable and sustainable Hawai‘i. Never before has civic voice been more important. That is why on March 21, the Department will be holding Civic Sense 2020, a Forum for Hawai‘i’s Future, at the state Capitol. High school students from across the state will gather to learn about, grapple with and deliberate on issues regarding Public Health and Welfare (Article IX), Conservation, Control and Development of Resources (Article XI) and Hawaiian Affairs (Article XII) from the Hawai‘i Constitution.

Students and teachers will have the unique opportunity to engage with leaders in government and law, environmental and indigenous concerns, and medicine. Students will improve their civic learning, become more knowledgeable about the issues facing their future and be exposed to dynamic strategies to empower their voice. Teachers will experience deliberative pedagogies and ways to help students take informed action.

I’m excited that through more opportunities like these, students will learn to effectively use their voice to lead in their communities with respect, aloha and deep consideration, while embracing diversity of thought.