While in kindergarten, Catherine’s favorite game was to play teacher to a room full of family members. When she reached college, Catherine’s studies in clinical psychology sparked an interest in education that has fueled her 34-year career.

This National Board Certified teacher connects lessons to real-life issues to engage students to make a difference. Students have collected pennies for leukemia to learn math, and they wrote a letter to the principal with suggestions about playground equipment to sharpen their persuasive writing skills.

Catherine’s drive to advance the profession has led her to various leadership roles, including as a mentor for the University of Hawaii’s teacher development program. She has also shared her expertise locally and abroad, including at international conferences in Japan, Singapore and Spain.

Catherine graduated with a bachelor’s degree in Child Development from San Diego State University, and she earned a Teacher Education Professional Diploma and a master’s degree in Curriculum Studies focused in pre-K to third grade from UH-Manoa. Catherine has helped lead Common Core implementation and made recommendations on the Educator Effectiveness System.

She also volunteers at the Waikiki Aquarium, where she coaches docents on their presentations and materials for school fieldtrips.
RICHARD ARASE
Maui District,
Maui Waena Intermediate School

When Richard was pursuing a teaching degree, a college professor offered him this advice: an effective teacher transforms the curriculum into something exciting and becomes a performer on stage where all eyes are on you. Today, this 16-year social studies educator turns students into classroom performers who take charge of their education. Richard believes all children can thrive with a safe learning environment and memorable experiences.

As a softball coach, Richard teaches youth about sacrifice, responsibility and teamwork. He chaired the school’s accreditation committee, helping secure it.

As one colleague remarked: “Richard is the type of teacher I wish I had when I was going to school, and want to be.”

MARLY MADAYAG
Kauai District,
Kalaheo Elementary School

In Marly’s classroom, students are encouraged to hunt for information and find answers to their own questions. Marly believes teaching is about fostering students’ ability to think for themselves.

In addition to chairing the fifth grade at Kalaheo Elementary, Marly directs a popular volunteer drama program and has been involved with the nonprofit Hawaii Children’s Theatre for 15 years.

Marly’s organization and creative skills, combined with training in special education and the gifted and talented program, allow her to meet the needs of all learners. She reflects on her practice and keeps notes about the sequence of her explanations, questioning strategies and rubrics to pinpoint where students are thriving or need more support.

ELIZABETH FRILLES
Windward Oahu District,
Olomana School

Elizabeth relates to Olomana students by drawing from her own life experiences overcoming challenges to graduate as valedictorian and becoming the first in her family to attend college.

This science educator transforms her class into a safe haven for at-risk students who consistently earn science, engineering and robotics awards. Elizabeth incorporates project, cultural and problem-based education to engage students in complex and relevant lessons.

Elizabeth’s commitment to excellence extends beyond her class. Despite serving as department head and in other leadership roles, she can be often seen coaching and mentoring student teachers and peers.

JAMIE TAKAMURA
Central District,
Red Hill Elementary School

As curriculum coordinator, Jamie treats the entire Red Hill campus as her own classroom. She knows every child’s name, needs and strengths, and helps fellow teachers analyze data and strategies to ensure all students will thrive.

Jamie also leads the school’s Academic Review Team, serves as data-team manager and Title I coordinator. She was instrumental in making Red Hill one of only three schools statewide to be recognized for high performance and closing the achievement gap in the last school year.

In the words of a co-worker, “Jamie is firm and fair … a team player and a leader. She has a winning attitude and perseveres until the job is complete.”

MASARU UCHINO
Leeward District,
Momilani Elementary School

After a successful career as an auto manufacturer salesman, Masaru found his true calling when he began teaching at Momilani in 2007. His recipe for success: create a culture of belief, optimism and perseverance, and students will achieve excellence.

A former Milken Teacher of Promise nominee, Masaru integrates standards-based learning into an original musical he writes, directs and produces each year. He also founded an afterschool running and fitness group: “The Momilani Fit Factory.”

Masaru believes teachers must be lifelong students who are willing to learn new strategies and reinvent themselves. As Masaru stated: “I don’t think I will ever become a perfect teacher, but I’ve had a lot of practice at becoming a perfect learner.”

DAVID HUITT
Hawaii District,
Kealakehe High School

David decided to become a teacher in his senior year, thanks to a no-nonsense educator who motivated him. For the past 20 years, David has been returning the favor, inspiring his own students to pursue their dreams.

Community service is a hallmark of David’s curriculum. His students have raised some $50,000 for orphans in India, cooked over 6,000 meals for the needy, and collected hundreds of bags of trash from roads, parks and beaches.

David chairs the History Department, sits on the school’s leadership team, and he has co-authored a state-approved social studies course. A former student who is now David’s co-worker praised his “relationships with students, creative lessons, patience and true spirit of service.”