



2014

State Teacher of the Year

**Matthew Lawrence**

*Honolulu District, Waikiki Elementary School*

**A**s you enter Waikiki Elementary, it is easy to spot Matthew’s students. They will be building climbing walls, solar powered go-carts and model homes, or a tennis ball launcher. When a blackout hit the school in the 2009-10 school year, the lights stayed on in Mathew’s classroom, thanks to a student-built bicycle generator that powered six bulbs.

Relevancy and project-based learning are hallmarks of Mathew’s teaching, which integrates the Philosophy for Children concept to shape his classroom into a community of thinkers.

In 2007, Mathew launched a science fair to provide students a venue to share their

experiments and creations with their peers and families. According to his principal, Matthew’s “openness to reform, his drive, his passion are contagious.”

A National Board Certified Teacher, Matthew earned a bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education with Middle School Endorsement from Illinois State University, and a master’s degree in Educational Psychology from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He has taught math and science at Waikiki Elementary since 2001, and served as the School Community Council chairman from 2006-11. Matthew is also a mentor teacher with the University of Hawaii undergraduate teaching program.

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

In a ceremony on Oct. 25, 2013, the State Teacher of the Year was selected from seven District Teachers of the Year. The Polynesian Cultural Center, the program’s corporate sponsor for 28 years, awarded \$500 to each District winner, and an additional \$1,000 to the State winner. Gifts of instructional software for each District winner and other classroom technology to the State winner were presented by SMART Technologies. The Hawaii Automobile Dealers’ Association, a co-sponsor for 14 years, awarded the State winner with a free one-year lease of a new car. A special mahalo to our sponsors!

## TERESA CRAMER

*Central Oahu District,  
Hale Kula Elementary School*



After graduating from college, Teresa spent 10 years as a social worker helping high-risk children in shelters and outreach programs. Feeling that her impact was “too little, too late,” Teresa became

a teacher to make a difference in the lives of children.

Teresa views teachers as facilitators of goals, dreams and ambitions. As a fifth-grade special education teacher, she piloted the first co-teaching inclusion class at Hale Kula Elementary. She also led the creation of a Hope Garden, an outdoor classroom that engages students in hands-on learning and important sustainability lessons.

In the words of a parent, “Teresa is a highly dedicated professional who knows how to motivate her students to strive for excellence.”

## TERRA WIGHT

*Leeward Oahu District,  
Nanakuli High & Intermediate School*



Terra credits a relationship of trust and respect with a former high school teacher for sparking in her a love for science and learning.

Today, Terra seeks to build strong bonds to inspire students. Her lessons blend rigor with relevancy and foster curiosity, allowing students to experience science in the world around them. She helped initiate an ecology club through which students and community members are partnering to restore native plants to Piliokahe Beach Park. On the Instructional Leadership Team, she helped develop new policies for tardiness, uniforms and curriculum that improved attendance and student achievement.

As a former student observed, “She has motivated us to do more, be more and dream more.”

## DAYNA HIRONAKA

*Windward Oahu District,  
Kahaluu Elementary School*



Dayna’s reason to be an educator is simple: To transform students’ natural curiosity into a love of learning.

Dayna measures her success by her students’ accomplishments and schoolwide progress. At Kahaluu Elementary, her grade level serves as a model on the use of formative assessment data to provide targeted instruction for all students.

Dayna’s dedication to teaching extends beyond the regular school day and outside the campus. After the bell rings, Dayna can be seen tutoring students, meeting with parents and collaborating with her peers. She also mentors student teachers at Hawaii Pacific University, believing that “the stronger the teachers, the more successful students will be.”

## ANTHONY WILLIAMS

*Maui District,  
Paia Elementary School*



Students entering Anthony’s classroom are greeted with a poster that reads, “Strive to do your best.” Anthony brings out the best in his students who learn to care for and respect each other in a supportive learning environment.

A Kumu Hula, Anthony started a hula halau at Paia Elementary to address needs of Hawaiian immersion students. To engage parents, he teaches Hawaiian language three nights a month.

Anthony is a valued mentor at the University of Hawaii at Hilo Hawaiian Immersion Teacher Development Program.

As his principal says: “Watching his enthusiasm, seeing the students light up and be excited to learn makes it a challenge to conduct walkthroughs – you just want to plant yourself down and stay for more!”

## ELIZABETH TIMBAL

*Hawaii District,  
Keaau High School*



Elizabeth draws from her own experiences as a high school student to model inspiring educators who had the greatest impact on her life.

Colleagues praise Elizabeth’s classroom management and genuine care for students. She helped spearhead the implementation of Advancement Via Individual Determination at Keaau High, joined the new teacher induction program and developed an Extended Learning Opportunity program. She strives to improve her craft, completing an English Language Learner course to better understand her students’ needs.

Her reward: Watching her students succeed beyond school. A former student wrote: “You made me discover talents that I never knew I had. You are the only one who took a chance to give me a chance.”

## JUSTIN YAMAGATA

*Kauai District,  
Waimea Canyon Middle School*



When Justin joined Waimea Canyon Middle eight years ago, he was surprised to learn students were not competing in the science fair. Today, thanks to Justin’s resilience, as many as 100 student

experiments are displayed in a successful science event, with several qualifying for state and even international tournaments.

This 2013 Hawaii Academy of Science Teacher of the Year has been instrumental in building Waimea Canyon’s science curriculum as department head and a member of the school’s leadership team.

In class, students praise Justin’s encouragement and individualized guidance. As a former student noted: “Without his support, many of his students such as myself would not have had the opportunity to discover our own passions.”