



2018

State Teacher of the Year

Vanessa Ching

Leeward District, Ewa Makai Middle School

Vanessa Ching is a National Board Certified elementary and special education teacher who has taught in the Hawai'i DOE for 14 years. She holds multiple positions at Ewa Makai Middle School — Student Activities Coordinator, Year Book Advisor, and Green Program Coordinator.

She emphasizes accountability, empowerment, and bringing positive change to the community. Her impact is felt broadly and individually. One her former students who was diagnosed with diabetes said of Ching: “When I was struggling... she helped me realize that this disease cannot dictate my life and helped me plan healthy eating habits... which even included Mrs. Ching changing her diet to help me adjust to my new lifestyle.”

As the Student Activities Coordinator, Ching has implemented service projects with community partners that have

broad impact, as her students, colleagues, and parents go beyond the campus to become stewards of the Ewa community, and which prepare students to be proactive, positive contributors to society.

As a result of her students' advocacy for a plastic-free Hawai'i, Ewa Makai is the only school in Hawai'i to have won the National Green Ribbon School certification. She implemented a bike safety program, and the school won an award in the 2017 E Ola Pono anti-bullying campaign.

Despite these successes, she feels that there is always more work to be done. She is dedicated to bettering relationships, encouraging positive behaviors, using good judgment, and providing opportunities to build self-esteem.

Ching says, “All we need is a belief in ourselves because when we have high expectations of ourselves and know that we can accomplish our goals, others will follow.”

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Teacher of the Year award is part of a prestigious national program that honors teaching excellence in the United States. Each year the Hawaii State Teacher of the Year is chosen from one of the seven HIDOE districts and public charter school winners following a rigorous selection process that includes the teacher's ability to inspire students to learn; to have earned respect among students, parents, and peers; to be active in the community as well as school; and to be able to perform the task of representing the teaching profession nationally and internationally. In December 2017, a national selection committee will convene in Washington D.C. to determine the four finalists. In April 2018, the President of the United States will introduce the National Teacher of the Year and all State Teachers of the Year to the nation.

ABOUT THE SPONSORS

Our corporate sponsors proudly acknowledge teaching excellence in Hawaii's public schools. The **Polynesian Cultural Center**, which has sponsored the program for more than 30 years, provides monetary awards to all teacher-winners. **The Hawaiian Electric Company** recognizes each teacher with a gift. **The Hawaii Schools Federal Credit Union** awards a monetary prize. **The Hawaii Automobile Dealers' Association**, a co-sponsor for 18 years, provides the State Teacher of the Year with the use of a new car for an entire year.



AMANDA FRETTO,
*Kaua'i District,
Kamakahelei Middle*

Fretto is a certified special education teacher with a Masters in Educational Psychology. In addition to teaching a Functional Life Skills class, she has cultivated the Unified Champions School program and Team Unify through Special Olympics, as well as music experiences for students with special needs through peer mentorship via United Sound. She's devoted to creating opportunities for students to develop friendships, break down barriers, and build the confidence and acceptance of special needs students. She is described by a colleague as having the "heart of a lion and compassion to do what she does like no other."



FRANCINE HUGHES,
*Maui District
Resource Teacher*

With 20 years of DOE experience, Hughes is certified in elementary education with a Masters in educational leadership. Her shared leadership style successfully promotes collaboration and understanding of DOE initiatives. She credits her husband for his support and encouragement, and Sharon Abrigo, a former mentor and colleague, for shaping her professional development design. CAS Lindsay Ball describes Francine as a "highly-reflective, solution-oriented, life-long learner who believes that developing and nurturing relationships is the key component when collaborating with fellow educators."



GREGG IHA,
*Central District
Resource Teacher*

From his early days at Nānāikapono Elementary, Iha has carried a key lesson learned from the Nānākuli community with him: Value every individual. He initiated the "Six Pillars of Character" program for keiki and adults in the Mililani Complex that resonated and is still in practice today. Iha lives by the creed: "Sometimes you lead by force of character, sometimes you lead with love, but always lead with honor and strength of character." CAS Bob Davis describes Iha as "a person whom administrators have come to know and rely on for his experience, passion, and commitment to service."

ERIKA KANEO,
*Hawai'i District
Waiākeawaena Elementary*



A National Board certified elementary teacher, Kaneo works with 2nd and 3rd graders in the Hilo-Waiākea Complex Area. She designs effective, differentiated and individualized instruction on three principles: that students learn best when they (1) feel engaged, (2) feel like they belong, and (3) are given opportunities to succeed. Kaneo gains her inspiration from her mother who faced every challenge as an opportunity for growth and change. She's described by CAS Brad Bennett as a teacher "who believes in helping students and teachers at different levels to grow to their full potentials, while approaching problems as opportunities, and that combination is the key to success."

DEL ONAGA,
*Windward District,
Olomana School*



Onaga has taught at-risk youths at Olomana School for seven years. He is a certified Career & Technical Education teacher in Industrial and Engineering Technology and is the lead teacher for the school's first academy, the Engineering Academy. His experience has formed beliefs that life-long learning is a tool of teaching, and addressing questions of "why" makes knowledge meaningful and retainable. Principal Stacey Oshio says Onaga is a model for his students "by being fully engaged, facilitating thinking, and not being afraid to take risks and make mistakes." His style is "a combination of quiet support and calm persistence of high expectations that allow his students to thrive."

CRISTIN PRIOLO,
*Public Charter Schools,
SEEQS*



Priolo has a masters and bachelor's of science in elementary education and special education. She centers her teaching on her belief that students become more passionate about learning when they can connect real-world problems to their own life experiences. A single class assignment on Ocean Sustainability, for example, sparked tremendous student interest and resulted in a variety of student projects designed to increase social awareness. Priolo was credited with taking a discouraged special education student and transforming him into a confident, capable student who can handle general education classes. One parent describes her as a "milestone person," someone unforgettable, who impacts you for a lifetime.

NAOMI SALAVERIA,
*Honolulu District,
Liholiho Elementary*



Salaveria has a dual certification in special education and elementary education. She focuses on building each student's strength and confidence through clear and consistent expectations, fostering social and academic growth, a steadfast belief that all children can grow, and a celebration of each child's success. Her passion is working with special education students with high needs. She has chosen to teach students with multiple disabilities, including autism and orthopedic handicaps. By addressing their behavioral and academic needs, her students successfully complete the school year with self-satisfaction. Her dedication to children continues after-hours as a volunteer at Shriner's Hospital.