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 district teacher 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 2015, a national selection committee will convene in Washington D.C. to determine the four finalists. In April 2016, 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 the teaching excellence of the State and District winners. The Polynesian Cultural Center, which has sponsored the program for 30 years, provides monetary awards to both the State and District winners. SMART Technologies provides gifts of 21st century instructional software and classroom technology for each District winner. The Hawaii Automobile Dealers’ Association, a co-sponsor for 16 years, awards the State Teacher of the Year with a free, one-year lease of a new car.
<table>
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<th>DAVID PAUL BRAUN, JR.</th>
<th>ALICIA CHANG</th>
<th>KATHY LIN</th>
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<td>Kauai District,</td>
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<td>Waimea Canyon Middle School</td>
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David Paul Braun, Jr., became a teacher because he “enjoys helping people find their light bulbs and keys to doors that didn’t appear to be there in the first place.” With an extensive background as a performer and composer, he has transformed education through music, using it to nurture creativity and individual voice of his students. Students share their love of music through performances at the Waimea Lights Parade and care homes, participation in the Waimea Vibes group, and their end-of-year musical yearbook CD.

Braun believes that continual assessment is key to a solid education. A teacher’s primary role is to cultivate a joy for learning by helping them set reasonable goals, being supportive, providing timely feedback, and promoting self-reflection.

Alicia Chang describes teaching as the “wonder that comes from working with children.” Every classroom experience has shaped her expectations of herself as a teacher – creativity, thoughtful management, open mindedness, and high expectations. In collaborating with her colleagues and community organizations, she has developed a cohesive, enriched curriculum that helps her with student growth. She has introduced and promoted the UH Stomp program, the Honolulu Museum of Arts’ Art to Go, Chaminade University’s “I am a Scientist,” and the First Lego teams to satisfy the diverse needs of students. Chang believes that a teacher’s role is finding the starting point to motivate, intrigue, and assist students on their journey of knowledge and discovery.

Fourteen years ago, Kathy Lin took a career break and discovered her love of teaching. Her academic preparation in biological and medical sciences has been an asset as a science teacher, and her expertise as a researcher has helped her guide students to top performances in the Hawaii State Science and Engineering Fair and Science Olympiad. She volunteers her time to coach students and teachers around the state that resulted in placements at national and international science fairs. Lin believes in allowing students to design their own lab experiments in order to emulate real life scientific investigations and deepen the understanding of the scientific process. She uses a combination of direct instruction and experiential learning to reach all learners and propel them forward.

JOY AULANI TAKATSUKA
Maui District, King Kamehameha III Elementary

Inspired by a family of dedicated teachers and motivated by her experience as a student, Joy Takatsuka exclaimed that “I cannot remember a time when I considered being anything other than a teacher.” She successfully transitions early learners from junior kindergarten to first grade by valuing them as individuals and recognizing their capabilities. She promotes the development of emotional and social skills to assist her students in facing bullying and life’s other challenges.

Takatsuka embraces her profession by contributing her talents to school leadership positions and participating in community sponsored literacy and childcare programs. She teaches because she wants to facilitate curiosity and discovery for learners.

LYNN YOSHIOKA
Central District, Mililani Middle School

The selection of teaching as a profession came when Lynn Yoshioka realized that she had some of the same qualities of humor, kindness, and ability that she had admired in her third grade teacher. The legacy of her former teacher inspires Yoshioka to provide a safe and comfortable learning environment and develop a good rapport with students. She spearheads STEM programs like robotics and First Tech Challenge at her school, and believes in active learning by both teacher and student. She employs engaging lessons that push her students to excel, best teaching practices, collaboration with peers, and positive relationship building. She believes that teachers have the responsibility for helping students find success.

DARRYL YAGI
Hawaii District, E.B. de Silva Elementary School

Darryl Yagi’s determination to pursue a teaching career was driven by the desire to make a difference in the lives of struggling students. Inspired by his former fourth and fifth grade teachers, he guides his students to recognize, develop, and realize their potential. In the classroom as well as the community, he views himself as an agent for positive change. Coach Yagi uses his basketball and golf platforms to provide a foundation for a well-rounded individual through hard work, desire, competitiveness, and teamwork. He volunteers as a leader for childrens’ activities, Boy Scout projects, and as a mentor to future teachers from UH-Hilo and Chaminade University. He feels blessed to contribute to the betterment of the lives of students.