

Lehua Elementary School achieves prestigious certification

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Lehua Elementary, located near the entrance of Pearl City Peninsula housing area, was recently recognized for developing students into 21st century leaders.

The FranklinCovey Institute designated it as the first Leader in Me Lighthouse School in Hawaii, one of 55 worldwide. There are 1,312 other schools in the Leader in Me Process seeking Lighthouse status.

For Principal Fay Toyama, this award culminates the journey for school success.

Faced with daunting challenges, such as continual student turnover/transition with 70 percent military dependents and 55 to 60 percent new students each year, Lehua implemented different programs since 2003 with varying success to encourage positive behavior/academic success in its students.

During the 2007 Model Schools Conference in Washington, D.C., Toyama learned about A.B. Combs Leadership Magnet Elementary School in Raleigh, N.C.

Combs transformed itself from the lowest district performing school in 1999 to a high-performing school with 97 percent of its students assessed at or above grade level in six years. The program, which can be seen at the website <http://www.theleaderinme.org>, was developed by Combs and the FranklinCovey Institute and was exactly what she had been looking for.

“We wanted students to learn intrinsically how it felt when they behaved in a positive way and not depend on extrinsic rewards— and to give them a Lehua legacy as global citizens in the 21st century,” she said.

Lehua initially implemented the process on its own and later voted to adopt The Leader in Me Program for School Year 2010-11. It obtained grants from Joint Venture Education Forum, a partnership of military, public school, legislative and local business/ community leaders to fund this effort.

Staff reduced their summer vacation by one day to complete the training and shared lessons learned/good ideas to build on each other's strengths. They applied the lessons to themselves to become better role models for students, and they educated and informed parents about this program. Students even taught their parents about the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.

“Our engineering club students incorporated the habits as they built robots and competed in the different



Lehua Elementary School Principal Fay Toyama, center, is honored by Hawaii State Sens. David Ige, left, and Clarence Nishihara, right. Photo courtesy of Lehua Elementary School

competitions. We also started a leader chat for each grade level of students, where students apply to meet for lunch with me to say what they liked about the school and what could be improved,” Toyama said.

“Most amazing has been the leadership notebook developed by every student. Each notebook includes a mission statement, academic and personal goals, data tracking, leadership roles, accountability partners, work samples, and assessments/evidence. Parents also raved on how the habits learned carried over to their children’s home lives,” Toyama said.

Toyama is retiring after 41 years as an educator on June 30, 2013. However, Lehua’s Lighthouse recognition is only the beginning.

“I am so proud of our staff, students, and families. It was a total team effort to achieve Lighthouse status. While most of our military students will move to other schools elsewhere on the mainland or overseas, the leadership skills they’ve mastered will carry on long after they leave Lehua and take their place as 21st century leaders,” said Toyama.



Lehua Elementary School Principal Fay Toyama, left, and Hawaii State Department of Education Superintendent Kathryn Matayoshi celebrate Lehua being named the first Leader in Me Lighthouse School in Hawaii. Photo courtesy of Lehua Elementary School