

Middle School Teachers Brush Up On Their Tech Skills

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By Alana Folen



Jasen Dela Cuadra, Daena Lyn Tokunaga and Blake Smeltzer of Waipahu Intermediate;

Teachers from across the state recently took part in the Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) program, a teacher-driven initiative for advancing science and technology in Hawaii's middle schools by enabling teachers access to multiple resources that can enhance instructional content skills and increase student interest in science, technology, engineering and math, often referred to as STEM.

"This program is designed to enhance the professional development of Hawaii's middle school teachers by providing teachers with the tools and support to further strengthen their STEM expertise," said Kari Nettel, RET Hawaii education specialist. "Support comes in the form of continued education, technical support in the classroom, technology tools and module development for use in the classroom.

This is a very needed area that was not being addressed until now."

During the two-day teachers' workshop June 25-26 at the University of Hawaii, Moanalua Middle teachers Kathleen Nagaji, Patricia Ishihara and Keith Wong; Waipahu Intermediate's Daena Lyn Tokunaga, Jasen Dela Cuadra and Blake Smeltzer; Highlands Intermediate's Kathy Lin and Laurie Morihara were among 45 striving to take away additional knowledge they can pass along to their students.



and Laurie Morihara and Kathy Lin of Highlands Intermediate School were among 45 lucky Hawaii teachers who had the opportunity to participate in the annual Research Experiences for Teachers summer workshop June 25-26 at UH-Manoa. Photos courtesy of the Hawaii Center for Advanced Communications.

According to Nettel, the program has grown immensely from its humble beginnings in 2004, when it was initiated by Dr. Magdy Iskander, director of the Hawaii Center for Advanced Communications at UH-Manoa.

"The program has expanded from one Oahu middle school to over 25 schools on four Islands," Nettel said.

Students are provided with laptops, PDAs and probes to use in the classroom, and customized lab curriculums, programs and technology applications are developed for the specific schools participating in the program in a "fun, hands-on environment."

By expanding their educational horizons in the fields of science and technology, students are encouraged to continue their education after high school. Many, in fact, end up pursuing degrees in these fields.



Patricia Ishihara, Keith Wong and Kathleen Nagaji of Moanalua Middle;

"These students will eventually enter Hawaii's work force. This (RET) ultimately helps the state of Hawaii and our economy," Nettel added.

RET is managed by the Hawaii Center for Advanced Communications in the university's College of Engineering. With support from staff and HCAC graduate students, RET hopes to expand to additional schools. Current funding is provided by the state of Hawaii, NSF and private organizations.

Schools interested in participating in RET programs should contact RET Hawaii at 956-4026 or e-mail Nettel at nettel@hawaii.edu.