



August 2002

“Pūpūkahī I Holomua” –Hawaiian Proverb

(translation: Unite to move forward; or, by working together we make progress)

Aloha WHEA Families and Friends,

As we prepare to set sail on a new school year, among my hopes for this special learning community of ours is that when asked what distinguishes and makes WHEA different than most other schools is that each of us can share, in our own way, that:

- *We are different because we believe young people can and should be trusted to make decisions that affect their learning and their lives.*
- *We are different because we value allowing students to apply their learning in real hands-on and meaningful ways that make a positive impact.*
- *And we are different because we believe that knowing how to think critically and creatively, and how to ask deep and sometimes uncomfortable questions is at the heart of being an educated and active citizen.*

By continuing to reimagine ways to further realize and fulfill the school’s mission and vision through honest reflection and embedding a growing array of best practices into our shared learning experience the coming year proves to be an exciting one for WHEA. Our talented team of teachers has been collaborating since last spring and through the summer forging a more cohesive and dynamic campus-wide design-thinking approach to our innovative and progressive educational ecosystem.

Within this intentionally scaffolded learning continuum that we feel will further enhance the journey of our young citizen-scholars, there also exists a new component of shared decision-making and leadership for our school community. This year, **all students are being asked to contribute to the governance and day-to-day operations needed to run their school** by serving on peer-run committees including ones focused on *budget & finance, rights & responsibilities, culture & climate, technology, communications & outreach, health & wellness, peer mentoring & advocacy*, and several others.

Parent-caregivers have always been valued stakeholders at WHEA and we will be calling on you to support student learning as volunteers and project mentors. Also, some may have an interest in serving on our new **Community Council**—an advisory and action team comprised of students, staff, parents, and community representatives. Together, the Council will work to support our Governing Board and school goals while also developing their own initiatives for the betterment of WHEA. An announcement of the first introductory meeting will be shared a few weeks into the start of the school year.

Soon, each family will be hearing directly from **a faculty advisor, assigned to each student** as a mentor and coach for the coming school year. Students will be meeting with their advisor throughout each week, along with a small cohort of schoolmates, to engage in interpersonal discussions about issues related to finding success and connections at WHEA and beyond, as well as opportunities for open dialogue about challenges and opportunities for growing up in today’s world. **Each child’s advisor is the family’s primary point of contact throughout the year** regarding academic needs, behavior and social dynamics, or anything else that comes up warranting shared attention. Of course, support is also readily available by reaching out to other teachers and staff, including me or Heather (Nakakura). We are all in this together.

I hope to meet our new families in the coming weeks, as well as connect again with our returning ones. On behalf of the teachers and staff, I know all of us view it as an honor working alongside you and your children as partners in moving forward a school that we all are proud to be a part of and that makes our lives happier and more purposeful. As we launch our collective canoe into the sea of possibility, I foresee an exciting and enriching educational voyage ahead. From my oar to yours, I look forward to paddling towards a future we need and want for each other, and for our children.

With kindness and sincere mahalo,

Joe