



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hawaii Technology Academy Receives National Grant for Mindfulness Room

Wailuku, Maui -- Hawaii Technology Academy (HTA), the state's largest public charter school, was awarded a national grant for its Maui Campus to nurture mindfulness practices during the school day.

HTA Maui high school seniors identified, wrote and submitted the grant proposal as part of their Expository Writing class for a project they created called, "MindfulNEST." The goal of the project is to create a safe space for students to decompress from the overstimulation and stresses of school and life by using mindfulness practices. Research shows that such practices support students' ability to improve personally and academically, as well as provide schools with an alternative approach to punitive interventions.

"As a student, I believe this project is needed to support mindful practices for students to come back to their 'true self,'" said Janae Wong, one of the students who wrote the grant. "Students will be able to better engage with others and accomplish tasks when they're calm and have had the space to release anything that's impacting them."

Seasoned Educator Jenn Fordyce wanted her senior students to learn about how adults use writing in real-life situations. "I know grant proposals are required across a wide variety of careers," said Ms. Fordyce. "They can also use these writing skills to seek funding for their own educations or creative projects after graduation. Having students decide the need and the solution before seeking funding helped them feel invested in the project and the quality of their work."

The grant will also support training faculty to use restorative justice practices for both education and discipline, to further cultivate a supportive school environment where students learn critical life skills as they develop academically.

"The social-emotional learning of a student often trumps academic focus, especially as we are teaching students how to navigate in the world as a productive member of a technologically-driven society," said HTA Maui Campus Director Kristie Fetterly. "Our teachers and counselor are dedicated to building positive relationships with students and supporting their emotional growth."

The MindfulNEST project is 100% student-led, supported by school administrators. Some of the components that will exist in the dedicated space are:

- A biofeedback station to help students learn how to monitor and recenter their emotions and energy
- A six-person station with wireless headsets that allows students to tune into a meditation or mindfulness recording
- Meditation floor pillows
- Fidget items

The MindfulNEST project was made possible by a grant by Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

HTA is a tuition-free, WASC accredited public charter school, serving more than 1,200 students in campuses across Hawaii Island, Kauai, Maui, and Oahu. A five-day-a-week program, HTA's blended learning model provides students with a combination of face-to-face instruction, virtual instruction, and independent learning each week. Students gain technical skills used in the professional world. They also learn experientially through consistent field studies, and have the flexibility to develop desirable employability skills through work-based learning programs with community partners, enhancing college and career readiness. To learn more about HTA, visit www.myhta.org.

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