

AN OPEN MIND

Our Schools Need Your Help Now

IF YOU WANT TO SUPPORT PUBLIC EDUCATION IN HAWAII, the time is now, during this education crisis caused by the pandemic.

And if you wonder how to help, one valuable way is through the ClimbHI Bridge, the nonprofit platform that connects individuals, businesses and nonprofits to teachers and students. Those students need you more than ever – the pandemic disrupted their learning this spring and is doing it again.

The Bridge lets you and your organization share knowledge and experience to guide and inspire young minds. That support includes classroom speakers, curriculum advice, contest judges and internships. Of course, it will be done remotely for now, but we have all gotten better at being virtually informative and inspirational.

There will be hiccups along the way, but we can make this work and thrive. Our support will help make today's students into effective citizens and workers of tomorrow. Along the way, you may find great future employees.

The state Department of Education has adopted the platform statewide as the way for public schools to connect with businesses and nonprofits, and the Hawai'i Executive Collaborative has committed to funding it for five years. Already, 120 businesses have signed up.

The platform was conceived at the 2018 Hawai'i Executive Conference and funded initially by 17 local businesses and nonprofits. More than 30 organizations and 10 schools participated in more than a year of testing and site development and it's now ready for a statewide launch.

If you want to help Hawai'i's public school students, send an email to info@climbhi.org and say who from your company will be the main point of contact.

FULL DISCLOSURE

I AM ONE OF THE FOUNDERS of the ClimbHI Bridge, along with UH's Susan Yamada and Julie Morikawa, a local innovator in tourism and the founder of the nonprofit ClimbHI, which has spent

years connecting the local tourism industry and our schools and students statewide.

Julie and her tech team have built a simple-to-use, intuitive platform. You choose which opportunities to offer and which schools to support, and you can withdraw or limit your support at any time. The platform makes it easy and sends you gentle reminders when schools reach out to you. It's like Match.com for education and it has never been more needed than now.

There are many efforts nationwide to connect businesses and public schools, but no state or city in the nation has built a platform so ambitious and comprehensive. It won't be perfect – we will continue to adjust and improve – but it will make a big difference.

The pandemic has thrown education into flux, so there will be plenty of pivots for the ClimbHI Bridge. Teachers and schools are trying to figure new ways of teaching while keeping students safe and healthy. It's not clear how quickly teachers and principals will be able to turn to the Bridge for help, but we want that support to be there when they ask. The 10 high schools on O'ahu involved in the beta testing are probably most likely to use it immediately; other high schools, with so much else on their plates right now, may link up with the program more gradually.

EVERY CHILD SHOULD THRIVE

ONE REASON THE BRIDGE WILL SUCCEED is that so many local people don't just care whether their own kids succeed. They want all of Hawai'i's children to thrive.

I know education changes lives because it changed my life and made all I have done possible.

This is a special plea to those who take pride in being graduates of public schools, like I do, but then send their kids to Hawai'i's private schools, again like I did, to ensure those children have every advantage possible: Now is your chance to give public school students some of those same advantages. Send an email to info@climbhi.org and let Bridge organizers know who from your company will be the main point of contact. Thank you.



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