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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2015**

## **COMMUNITY INVITED TO WAIMEA MIDDLE SCHOOL'S 9-CLASSROOM STEM BUILDING GROUNDBREAKING ON WED., SEPT. 9, 2015**

All of North Hawai'i is invited to join Waimea Middle School students, families, faculty and staff for a groundbreaking celebration from 12:45-1:15 p.m., Wed., Sept. 9, 2015, for a long-time community dream of new 21<sup>st</sup> century science and technology labs and classrooms.

"We invite the entire community to come celebrate the start of construction of our 9-classroom STEM building," said WMS Principal Amy Kendziorski. "This is the largest major investment by the State of Hawai'i in public education in Waimea in more than 25 years. It's an inspiring example for our students of their community coming together to do what's best for them."

"The groundbreaking will convey deep gratitude to many in our community who have spent years working together to make this nearly \$16 million dream come true for our students. We especially thank our legislators who really went to bat for our children, beginning with Sen. Lorraine Inouye and Rep. Cindy Evans, who secured the first \$1 million in 2007 for planning, design and engineering. And then more recently, we thank former State Sen. Malama Solomon and Rep. Evans who, together, secured nearly \$15 million more for construction and furnishings."

"Many don't realize how big of an achievement this is; every penny in the state construction budget is hard fought for, and at the Legislature, Oahu has the most votes. It takes collective action by the community and elected officials to build relationships to secure funding for large projects. WMS' faculty, staff, students, families and community friends have been working on this since 2004, and then in 2007 stepped up their advocacy, taking students to testify at the legislature and collecting thousands of signatures from family members and friends.

"We also owe a warm mahalo to both former Gov. Neil Abercrombie and current Gov. David Ige, both of whom have actively supported this project – Gov. Ige included \$15 million in the budget when he was Senate Ways and Means Chair, and Gov. Abercrombie immediately released the funding to keep the project moving."

"We also thank the DOE and DAGS for believing that Waimea children need and deserve state-of-the-art learning facilities," she said.

The groundbreaking will begin with a protocol chant by all WMS 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, faculty and staff, followed by a brief expression of gratitude to the public conversion charter school's many partners. It will conclude with a turning of the earth led by six students, two per grade level, representing their classes as Waimea leaders of tomorrow.

Isemoto Contracting Co., Ltd. of Hilo has been awarded the construction contract, and has been issued a Notice To Proceed effective Mon., September 14. As required by major construction Best Management Practices, one of the first steps will be installing a 12'-high dust screen around the perimeter of the construction site.

WMS' new STEM building project, located between the Mala'ai school garden and several of the school's portables, will:

- Include four general classrooms, three science labs, two computer labs, a teacher planning room, an office, a student services room, a conference room and restrooms.
- Be integrated into the adjacent Mala'ai school garden for hands-on, place-based lessons with an exterior mini-amphitheater.
- Include 20 new paved parking stalls, plus paving of the back entry drive.

Guests attending the groundbreaking are urged to arrive early and enter campus through the back gate near Kahilu Theatre and park on the field, then walk to the nearby project site next to Mala'ai school garden. Comfortable shoes and weather protection suggested. No RSVP requested – just come.

For more information about the project including the Final Environmental Assessment and Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI), go to: <https://sites.google.com/a/wmpccs.org/home/home/new-9-classroom-science-tech-building>.

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