

**Mori, Ashley**

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**From:** Ted Hong <ted@tedhonglaw.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 5, 2021 3:42 PM  
**To:** Dacayanan, Melissa; Araujo, Jaclyn  
**Subject:** Item #4 Connections New Century Public Charter School/CBESS (SPP-12-000138)  
**Attachments:** CBESS.2021.Romeo's Presentation for Planning Commission.docx

Aloha, attached is the written testimony for one of the people who will be speaking on behalf of the School during the presentation. Please include this for the Commissioners to review and as part of the Record.

Thanks,

Ted H. S. Hong  
Attorney at Law

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## **Romeo Garcia's Presentation for Windward Planning Commission**

Date: Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021 9:00 AM

### **Connections Public Charter School Board of Directors (Alphabetical)**

Kirk Bailey, Community Member  
Romeo Garcia, Po'o Kumu/Director  
Elsie Hayashi, Community Member  
Ron Kim, CPCS Parent  
Anna Madrid, CPCS Parent  
Libby Oshiyama, Community Member  
Shinji Salmoiraghi, Board President/Community Member  
Pamela Thatcher, Faculty Representative  
Christina Wilbourn, Staff Representative

Pua Kaai, Charter School Commission Liaison

### **School Leadership**

Romeo Garcia, Po'o Kumu/Director  
B.A., Theater Arts and Rhetoric, Occidental College  
M.A., Education: Staff and Curriculum Development, Mills College  
Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership, Mills College (Leave of Absence)

**Bio:** Romeo Garcia has worked as an educator since 1984. He began his career as an elementary school teacher in the Oakland Unified School District in Oakland, California. He worked at Mills College in Oakland from 1986 -2006 as the Director of Federal TRIO Programs: Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search and as the Assistant to the President. Romeo is co-founder of ARISE Charter High School in Oakland. He has been an Educational Consultant, Executive Director of the Peralta Community Colleges Foundation and Dean of Special Services and Programs at Merritt Community College. Romeo moved to Hawai'i Island in 2016 where he served as the Po'o Kumu/Director at Laupāhoehoe Community Public Charter School. Romeo has been at Connections Public Charter School since 2018 as the Vice Principal and now as Po'o Kumu/Director.

**School Mission:** To create an 'ohana that is conducive to the recognition and development of individual talents. Thematic and experiential learning experiences are provided that focus on how students construct knowledge using creative and critical thinking. Classroom experiences are connected to real life experiences so that students can grow in the understanding of themselves in relation to their community and the world.

**Connections' 'Ōlelo No'eau (#203):** " 'A'ohē pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okāhi." "All knowledge is not taught in one school."

### Geographical Distribution

This is the breakdown of the Hawai'i County Districts and cities that the students are from based on mailing addresses. Note that there may be some discrepancy because this is a mailing address, not a physical address. Should be a small amount.

**This is according to Hawai'i County Districts: Hilo, Puna, Other.  
We provide free bus transportation to families that need it.**

District	Number	Percentage
Hilo	250	69.64%
Puna	108	30.08%
Other	1	0.28%
	359	100.00%

City	Number	Percentage
Hakalau	1	0.28%
Hawaii Nat'l Park	2	0.56%
Hilo	221	61.56%
Honomu	1	0.28%
Keaau	52	14.48%
Kurtistown	11	3.06%
Mt View	24	6.69%
Pahala	1	0.28%
Pahoa	18	5.01%
Papaikou	6	1.67%
Pepeekeo	21	5.85%
Volcano	1	0.28%
	359	100.00%

**\*HIDOE Infinite Campus Database**

<b>Total K-12 Enrollment</b>	<b>359</b>
Male	188
Female	171
Special Education	68
504 Student Support Plans	19
English Language Learners	28

## Student Demographics

Race	Number	Percentage
American Indian or Alaska Native	10	2.79%
Black	16	4.46%
Chinese	2	0.56%
Filipino	15	4.18%
Native Hawaiian	138	38.44%
Japanese	15	4.18%
Portuguese	15	4.18%
Samoan	1	0.28%
White	98	27.30%
Micronesian	19	5.29%
Tongan	5	1.39%
Other Asian	6	1.67%
Other Pacific Islander	8	2.23%
Primary Not Selected	11	3.06%
Total	359	100.00%

\*HIDOE Infinite Campus Database

## Child Nutrition

Since Connections serves predominantly low-income families (87.9%) we offer free, nutritious school meals to all children through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Child Nutrition Program. During the school closures caused by the pandemic in the school year 2020-2021, Connections offered free meals to students in the Hilo community.

## Grants

Artists in the Schools

REACH - Afterschool Programing

UPLINK - Afterschool Programing, Technology Focus

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Child Nutrition Program, Community Eligibility Provision

U.S Department of Agriculture - Farm to School Grant

U.S. Department of Education Title 1 Program

U.S. Department of Education - 21st Century Learning Center Grant

## **Partnerships**

Akaka Foundation for Tropical Forests

Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance

Hawai'i Agriculture Foundation

Hawai'i PK-12 Research & Development Consortium, State Innovation Initiative

Ho'ouana Pono Drug Prevention Program

Kamehameha Schools - Environmental Education Programs

Kama'āina Kids

Kohala Foundation

University of Hawai'i System - UH and HCC

## **Connections Alumni**

Work at Connections - We currently have alumni employed in the following positions:

- Math and Culinary Arts teacher who has been teaching at Connections for \_\_\_\_\_ years.
- The coordinator of our 21st Century Learning Center grant.
- Two Educational Assistant in the Elementary level. One also works in our afterschool program.
- One staff person who works in our Studio Shaka After School Program
- One staff person on our facilities team.
- Two current students who work as Studio Shaka After School Program coordinators.

Attend College - Graduates are enrolled in both University of Hawai'i and Hawai'i Community College programs. One of our students, *Kit Neikirk*, is currently studying in Scotland as an exchange student from the University of Hawai'i. He was featured last week in an article entitled Boy Wonder. This graduate's current research "focuses on recording and analyzing the changes to mitochondria in relation to knock down of genes. Neikirk began his post-secondary academic career as a high school freshman at only 13 years old, when he also started classes at community college level. He graduated high school from Connections Public Charter School in Hilo as a sophomore, the youngest in his graduating class. He entered UH Hilo in 2019 as a 15-year-old triple major in biology, sociology, and chemistry. He plans to graduate with his bachelor degrees in spring 2023, and from there attend medical school to continue his journey toward becoming a healthcare provider."

## Are in the Local Workforce

KTA, Walmart, Mattress Firm, Big Island Countertops, Bed Mart, Tony Honda, Target, Kawamoto's, Miranda's Country Store, Tractor Supply Company, Hilo Fish Company, Pizza Hut, Hilo Kia, Life Care Center, Hamakua Honey, Taco Bell, Pho' Viet, N.A.R.S, Hilo Bay Cafe, American Eagle, U.H. Hilo, Hapuna Prince Hotel, Aloha Monday's, Home Depot, HPM, Ross Department Store.

Visit Campus Regularly - Because Connections continues to be a resource and because they have an allegiance to the school based on the appreciation they're for their experience as a student, we have regular visits from alumni of the school. They come for further support and/or to update us on their lives.