



Yuki Ka'ea Lyons-Yglesias Class of 1991

Where do you live now? What do you love about it?

I currently live in Keauhou Mauka, a place I deeply cherish for its serenity and breathtaking sunsets. The peaceful atmosphere provides a sense of calm and connection to nature that is truly special.

What I love most is the opportunity to engage in sustainable practices on our 'āina. Living here allows me to honor and care for the land, embracing a lifestyle that aligns with our cultural values of stewardship and sustainability. It's a privilege to live in such a beautiful place where I can contribute to preserving its natural beauty for future generations.

Describe your career path since graduating from Konawaena High.

Since graduating from Konawaena High School, my career has been dedicated to supporting and promoting Hawaiian language and culture, as well as fostering educational opportunities for our community.

In 1998, I began my journey as a Hawaiian Language Immersion Kindergarten Teacher at one of the first Hawaiian immersion

schools in Keaukaha, Hilo. I later returned to Kona to help establish and grow Ke Kula Kaiapuni o Kona, a new Hawaiian language immersion school.

In 2003, I launched a Hawaiian language radio program on Sunday afternoons as a volunteer, contributing to the Hawaiian language movement. This work led to my eventual role as an on-air personality on weekends, in addition to hosting my Hawaiian language program.

In 2010, I joined Hawai'i Community College as a Hawaiian language instructor, teaching at its Kealahou campus. The following year, I transitioned from the Department of Education to focus on teaching at the college while simultaneously expanding my radio career. I became a co-host and Content Brand Manager for KAPA Radio's Morning Show.

During this time, I helped implement the Early College program, providing schools like Konawaena High and Ehunuikaimalino with Hawaiian lifestyles courses, allowing students to earn their Hawaiian Lifestyles Certificate.

Understanding the challenges faced by teachers and students, I initiated Kāko'o I Nā Keiki (Support the Children), a community program through KAPA Radio. This initiative raises awareness and provides school supplies, slippers, and non-perishable food items to schools island-wide during school breaks.

In 2013, after more than 30 years of dedicated study, I formally graduated as a hula practitioner under the guidance of my esteemed Kumu, Nani Lim Yap. Following this significant milestone, my sister and I established Hālau Ka'eaikahelani in Keauhou Mauka. Our hālau serves as a space to perpetuate the traditions, values, and beauty of hula, fostering cultural preservation and

growth within our community.

In 2022, I retired from both radio and Hawai'i Community College and returned to the Department of Education as an administrator.

Currently, I am proud to serve as the Vice Principal of Kahakai Elementary School, continuing my commitment to education and the community.

What was your most memorable experience at KHS?

I graduated in 1991—My most memorable experience at Konawaena High School was becoming a cheerleader and contributing to the school's vibrant energy by organizing pep rallies for the student body. It was an incredible opportunity to foster school pride and unity, as these events brought students and staff together in a shared celebration of our Wildcat spirit.

In addition to the thrill of leading cheers, our football games were unmatched in excitement and enthusiasm. The stands were always filled with students, families, and community members who came together to support our team. The electric atmosphere, full of pride and school spirit, made every game feel like a special event.

I can't forget the schoolwide events that I also created with other student leaders like May Day and talent night! Those moments taught me the importance of teamwork, leadership, and creating a sense of community—values I continue to carry with me to this day.

What advice would you give to Konawaena High School students?

The advice I would give to students at Konawaena High School today is to truly pay attention, stay engaged, and never take these moments for granted. Your time in high school will pass more

quickly than you realize, and the experiences you have here—both in and out of the classroom—will shape the foundation for your future.

Be present in every opportunity, whether it's in your classes, extracurricular activities, or time spent with friends and teachers. High school isn't just about academics; it's about discovering who you are, building lifelong skills, and preparing for the next steps in your career and life.

Remember, the lessons you learn now—discipline, collaboration, and perseverance—are tools you'll carry into college, work, and beyond. Take pride in your journey, ask questions, and don't be afraid to challenge yourself. This is your time to grow, so make the most of it!

Have you been back to campus since graduation? If yes, for what occasion?

Yes, I have had the opportunity to return to campus recently for a vice principal meeting. It was a meaningful experience to revisit the place where so many of my own memories were made. Walking through the familiar hallways and seeing how the campus has evolved over the years brought back a sense of nostalgia and pride.

During my visit, I was fortunate to enjoy a wonderful luncheon prepared by the students, which was not only delicious but also a testament to their hard work and dedication. It was inspiring to see the talent and commitment of the current generation of Wildcats. Being back on campus reminded me of the strong sense of community that Konawaena fosters, and it was an honor to return professionally, contributing to the future of education in Hawai'i.