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Hawaii News

Elementary school at Schofield is renamed for Inouye

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Hawaii first lady Dawn Ige talked with Ken Inouye, son of the late U.S. Sen. Daniel Inouye, in the library of the newly named Daniel K. Inouye Elementary School at Schofield Barracks on Monday.

An elementary school serving mostly military families on Schofield Barracks now bears the name of the late U.S. Sen. Daniel K. Inouye, who was remembered Monday during a ceremony at the campus as a staunch supporter of education and the military.

Inouye, a highly decorated World War II veteran and the second-longest-serving U.S. senator in history, died in December 2012 at age 88. Schofield was the home of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, for which Inouye volunteered during the war.

Monday's renaming event and a blessing coincided with the recent completion of a \$33 million renovation project that added several new buildings and upgraded aging facilities at the Wahiawa school, which is nearly 60 years old. Inouye is credited with helping direct federal dollars to schools serving military dependents.

"As a graduate of McKinley High School and a true public servant for the people of Hawaii, Sen. Inouye was a staunch supporter of our public schools," said Kathryn Matayoshi, superintendent of the Department of Education.

First lady Dawn Ige said the school reflects Inouye's support for 21st-century learning, civics education and international teachings. "It is fitting that Sen. Inouye's name graces this school that is preparing students to make their own stand on the state, the nation and the global community," she said.

The school, formerly called Hale Kula Elementary, was built in 1959 and has an enrollment of close to 800 students who are mostly military dependents. The state Board of Education voted earlier this year to rename the school Daniel K. Inouye Elementary School. Signage has since been added to reflect the change.

"This school has historic ties to Sen. Inouye," said Jan Iwase, the school's principal. "This school was opened in 1959 when Hawaii became a state and Sen. Inouye was first elected to Washington. He always cared about education and the military, and this campus is a combination of both."

The school's multimillion-dollar renovations, which began in 2013, resulted in a new two-story classroom building, additional classrooms, a library/media center and student center, a covered play-court, and upgrades to the administration building and existing classrooms.

The school's facilities had ranked ninth worst among the 160 schools the Department of Defense studied in 2011. Schools were rated on their physical condition and capacity to accommodate students. The 12 worst-rated schools were invited to apply for federal grants.

The Defense Department had awarded the school a \$26.6 million grant as part of a \$250 million effort to upgrade public schools on military bases nationwide. The state DOE provided \$6.6 million in matching funds.

Military officials called the school's renaming fitting.

"This building is a big deal for a couple of reasons. First of all, I think it might be the nicest building on post right now," said Maj. Gen. Christopher Cavoli, commanding

general of 25th Infantry Division at Schofield Barracks. "But it's also a great school because of the name. ... (Inouye's) lifetime of service to his country and to the people of this state is truly remarkable. ... For the sons and daughters of soldiers to get to go to a school named after such a remarkable role model is truly a great thing."

U.S. Sen. Mazie Hirono said two other Hawaii schools were cited in the rankings — Solomon Elementary at Schofield Barracks and Mokapu Elementary at Marine Corps Base Hawaii — and promised to continue working to secure funding for all schools serving military families here.

"Sen. Inouye was really the guiding light behind the appropriations and the idea of supporting our schools on military bases," she said. "And it's not the kind of funding that normally occurs unless there's a champion like Sen. Inouye. ... I think the senator had a tremendous vision about what we need to do to support our children."

Ken Inouye, son of the late senator, thanked officials for the honor. He said in preparing his remarks, he wondered what his father would think of the occasion.

"I think the first thing he would think to say is 'thank you,'" Inouye said. "And the next thing I think he would say is, as beautiful as these facilities are and as much work and machinations and maneuvering of the legislative process, every element it took to make all of this happen, the real payoff here comes in seeing it put into use and seeing the hardworking people of this school making it all happen. ... You bring this place to life."

Correction: Solomon Elementary School is on Schofield Barracks. An earlier version of this story and the Tuesday print edition story said the school was on Wheeler Army Airfield.