

KANU O KA 'ĀINA:

NAVIGATING BETWEEN TWO WORLDS

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## **ABSTRACT**

For decades Hawaiian students have failed to thrive academically in public education. In order to understand the reason behind that difficulty, this study examines the history of education in Hawai'i and the cultural dissonance between the expectations in mainstream classrooms and expectations for how Hawaiian children are to learn and behave. With public charter schools as a vehicle, Hawaiian leaders and educators design a culturally congruent pedagogy that side-steps the mismatch of expectations in the conventional schools. By using Hawaiian cultural wisdom as a foundation, Kanu o ka 'Āina Charter School aims not only to ground their students in cultural knowledge but also prepare them to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This study explores how effectively Kanu o ka 'Āina is able to navigate between two worlds.

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## EXPLANATION OF TERMS

As the reader will soon notice, many Hawaiian words are included in this text. If they are words common enough in English to be in an English dictionary (such as aloha and hula) no translation is provided. If there are words that a reader unfamiliar with Hawai'i would need assistance with, then a translation in parenthesis follows the Hawaiian word. All Hawaiian words are written with the proper macrons, including kahakō(s) (long vowel marks) and 'okina(s) (glottal stops that are written as a backwards apostrophe.) Calibri font is chosen because of the clarity with which it presents the Hawaiian macrons.

There are some words that even though in English, still need explanation. The proper name of the Hawaiian charter school I am reporting on is Kanu o ka 'Āina. Since that is a long name and people typically refer to it as Kanu in daily conversation, I will often refer to Kanu o ka 'Āina as simply Kanu.

Another term that is thorny even in English is “conventional” or “mainstream” public schools. Kanu and the other thirty charter schools are also public schools within the DOE (Department of Education) of the State of Hawai'i. But because they are so innovative in their curriculum and the facilities (of start up charters) are not typical of what is presented in the “regular” neighborhood public schools. Since it is not my intention to speak dismissively of the standard public schools by referring to them as the “regular” public schools I will refer to them as the “conventional” or “mainstream” schools as my way of differentiating them from charter schools.

Another term that needs clarifying is “projects,” because it is used to mean several different things. In education and business, a project is a defined task or unit of study. Students and classes at Kanu as well as all schools do work on projects. But at Kanu and other schools that emphasize a holistic, interdisciplinary approach, they teach using project-based learning. That means focusing on a theme that ties together learning from a variety of different content areas. An example is the imu (underground oven) project described in a later section that draws together experiential lessons in social studies (history, culture and chant), science (biology and environment) with language arts (logging the process and creative writing.)

There is one other use of the word “Projects” with a capital “P”, that might add confusion to the word. At Kanu they refer to their homeroom groupings of secondary students as “Projects”. When they talk about a “Project” such as “Pu’upūlehu Project”, they are referring to a set of middle and high school students along with their teacher and the site where they work and study.

The name of the town where Kanu o ka ‘Āina is located can be a source of confusion because it has two names. Its official name is Waimea, but because there are other towns by the name of Waimea on O’ahu and Kaua’i, “the post office and zip code took on another name for it – Kamuela” (Ching, 7.) “Kamuela”, Hawaiian for Samuel, was selected, honoring a prominent resident” (Sperry 2010.) Throughout this study, I will refer to the area of the Big Island where Kanu is located as Kamuela, but the maps of charter schools in Hawai’i, name the area as Waimea. Please be aware that the town

and area of Kamuela and Waimea on the Big Island (Island of Hawai'i) are one and the same.

## PREFACE

This thesis examines the varied mismatches that occur in the educational system as people try to teach or learn cross-culturally. Mismatches between students and the curriculum, between students and teachers, and between the educational system and schools in Hawai'i and the various strategies people deploy to overcome them will be investigated and explained.

### **My Connection to the Difficulties Hawaiian Students Face**

As a haole (Caucasian) teacher recruited out of the Midwest to teach in Hawai'i, I experienced a mismatch and my career reflects the strategies I used to walk in multiple worlds. As a mainland recruit, the Department of Education brought me over from Michigan State University because I had teaching credentials. Although I might have eased into a teaching career with only the usual amount of difficulty in the Midwest, I was pretty much worthless to my students for the first several years because of cultural differences.

Just as many mainland recruits are placed in vacancies on the Leeward Coast of O'ahu, I was one of forty new recruits out of a total faculty of seventy, placed at Nānāikapono Elementary School. Two other mainland recruits and I formed the special education "department" in 1970. One of my partners (brought in from Wisconsin) left in June as soon as her first school year ended. The other (brought in from Florida) lasted two years. At least my partners completed whole school years. One woman with whom I was becoming friends bailed out in October saying: "I loved teaching for two years. But this isn't teaching!" The office staff

told a story about a teacher with a contract who drove out to Nānākuli, drove around the school parking lot taking a look at Nānāikapono and drove back out never to return.

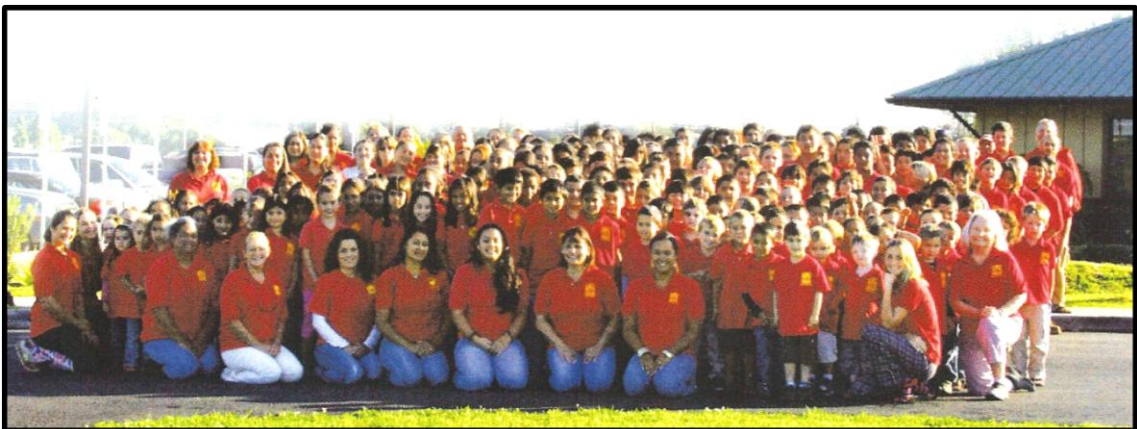
Only a small percentage of mainland recruits stay long enough to acclimate into society in Hawai'i. It took years of shopping at the same stores; reading the same newspapers; belonging to a few community organizations; marrying and owning a home before I was viewed as being part of the community. Only through this gradual process of acculturation that demonstrated investment in becoming part of the community, did I attain any standing in the eyes of the other teachers, much less my students and their parents. I had to adapt, taking on new attributes (style of clothing, relationships, an ear for the speech patterns, knowledge of Hawaiian language, culture and places) before I could put what I had learned in the Midwest effectively into practice in the schools of Hawai'i. Up until that time, even with a newly minted master's degree, I was unable to make the skills I possessed work in this new culture. While this was aggravating for me, it represented a considerable amount of lost learning time for my students. My journey of learning how to walk in the world of my newly adopted home in the Hawai'i schools was very slow indeed.

## **My Path to this Research Topic**

My attention was completely captured when a family of four boys (three of whom were eligible for special education) transferred out of my school to enroll in Hālau Lōkahi a nearby charter school with a Hawaiian cultural focus. Why would parents pull students out of a fully supported mainstream DOE school with credentialed teachers plus free lunch and free breakfast to attend an underfunded Hawaiian culture based charter school? There was something about that type of education that superseded facilities, funding and teacher credentials, which was so compelling parents and children chose that style of learning. To me, it was such a counterintuitive choice for parents with such a discrepancy between facilities, funding and credentials in the conventional public schools on one side and the cobbled together facilities of the Hawaiian charter schools on the other. As my career was ending, I had to find the answer to this perplexing choice. Along my research path I came upon the pedagogy of Dr. Kū Kahakalau who created Kanu o ka 'Āina.

At Kanu o ka 'Āina New Century Public Charter School, their curriculum laden with Hawaiian cultural values strives to enable students to “walk in two worlds.” This study explores the mismatch between Hawaiian cultural values and the instructional methods employed by the conventional public schools with the resultant underachievement by students of Hawaiian ancestry. That understanding highlights how Kanu o ka 'Āina narrows the breach between schools and students. What I learned as a participant observer at this school is that Kanu o ka 'Āina avoids the frustration and ineffectiveness Hawaiian youth too often experience in the public schools by grounding youth in their own culture while simultaneously achieving the academic skills required by the Western style educational institutions.

My admiration goes out to Kū Kahakalau and the founding parents of Kanu o ka 'Āina for creating a thriving, innovative solution to the mismatched education of the past. My gratitude also goes out to Dr. Kahakalau for the invitation and continuing support of my research at Kanu in Kamuela on the Island of Hawai'i. The three months and a week (September 12<sup>th</sup> through December 19<sup>th</sup> of 2009) comprised the core of my research along with three preliminary visits plus two follow-up visits. During my three-month residence as a participant observer I observed every classroom and Project from pre-school through high school, except one. Regretfully, due to scheduling conflicts, I was unable to experience secondary education in the Waipi'o Project located in unspoiled Waipi'o Valley at the end of the Hāmākua Coast.



This group photo of students and staff of Kanu o ka 'Āina was taken on December 16, 2009 on the grounds of Hālau Ho'olako. Val Hanohano, the Technology Coordinator, who did the photography, gave permission for use of this photograph.

The author (with white hair) kneels on the right of the photo.

Teachers and staff of Kanu o ka 'Āina were all gracious to me in a helpful, solicitous manner exemplifying the Aloha Spirit making my stay not only productive but enjoyable as well. Some I connected with on a deeper level than others, as is typical of all human relationships. Two faculty members opened their hearts and classrooms to

me from the first days of my research period at Kanu. Nicole Anakalea of Project Pu'ukapu and Val Hanohano in the Technology Center welcomed me during normal weeks, distinctly non-normal special event times and when I did not have any particular place to go and needed a place to hang out. They provided places from which to look out, observing the rhythm of life at Kanu. Since I spent so much time in both of these locations and had so many conversations revealing deep and unguarded thoughts, my perspective of Kanu was formed with Pu'ukapu and the Tech Center as my home base. I extend my deepest appreciation to Aunty Nicole and Aunty Val for their willingness to open their hearts, thoughts and classrooms to me. I only hope that I fully and faithfully describe this daring, innovative solution to mismatched education that is Kanu o ka 'Āina.

# INTRODUCTION

## **Statement of the Problem**

Students of Hawaiian ancestry have struggled in the public school system for at least fifty years. The underachievement of a large proportion of Hawaiian youth and the Hawaiian community in general is not due to their individual failings. The American style of education from the missionaries in early nineteenth century until today does not match their cultural values and so depresses Hawaiian students' chance at academic success.

## **Purpose of this Study**

Since there has been marked underachievement on the part of Hawaiian youth for an extended period of time, continuing on with the same style of education will only lead to further dismal student achievement. The purpose of this study is to document a new style of pedagogy in alignment with Hawaiian cultural values that strives to enable Hawaiian youth "to walk in two worlds".

## **Scope of this Study**

Although it took more than a year to write up this research, the focus will remain on the research period. The research period started with preliminary visits and then the three plus month period of residence in Kamuela with daily observation at Kanu o ka 'Āina from September 12<sup>th</sup> through December 19<sup>th</sup> of 2009. By extension, how well the students and seniors did on assessments and college acceptance throughout the 2009-2010 school year, is pertinent to this discussion.

During the writing period, which extended over three semesters, life at Kanu continued on. Kanu was granted accreditation and various faculty members transitioned. While it is tempting to discuss those changes and at times it feels as if I am writing about “ancient history”, I will restrict my focus to describing what Kanu was like at the time of my research period. Kanu o ka 'Āina was in operation nine years prior to my arrival and a year and a half after my departure until the completion of this thesis. For the sake of this particular study, this one moment in time will be the focus.

## **Trying to Cope as a Mainland Haole (Caucasian) Teacher Recruit**

As a new teacher recruit beset by problems on all sides, it was impossible to sort out which difficulties were due to inexperience; lack of instructional materials; lack of understanding of Hawaiian culture or appropriateness of the style of instruction for that

community. Although we did not know statistics or root causes at that time, I did know that my special education class in the 1970's was filled with Hawaiian students who were eligible for special education because they were "educably retarded". That is an archaic term that meant they were mildly retarded, ones who did not learn to read or write well but blended into the community during non-school hours. Karen Roberts, who taught fourth grade, reports "there were only three or four students in her (regular education) classroom who read even close to grade level. About half of her class read at the first grade, primer or even pre-primer level" (Roberts, 2/3/11.)

I also was aware of a teacher turn-over rate that was so high the office staff refused to teach us how to fill out purchase orders, field trip or film strip request forms because it was a waste of their time. They assumed we mainland recruits were going to "run home" at any moment, so it was not worth their time to explain those forms. The ladies who managed the school office were not far off in their appraisal of us. Karen Roberts remembered that by the end of the semester, six new recruits had left Nānāikapono to return to the mainland. Out of a faculty of seventy, forty were brand new. Ms Roberts recalls a prediction that about the same number of new recruits would be needed again the following year due to the turnover. It was true. The following September, there were 35 new teachers on campus (Roberts, 2/3/11.)

Classroom behavior was a major concern. Not only did I lack credence as an authority, but no teaching materials (books, textbooks or even office supplies) were provided for my classroom when I arrived. None of us mainland recruits could

understand what the students were explaining to us in Hawaii Creole English (Pidgin English) so we were unable to referee any difficulties between students. Our students were quick to solve frustrations by non-verbal means, such as fighting or escaping. During my first semester, my Principal counseled me “Don’t even worry about academics for awhile. Just get their behavior under control. Try to keep them from jumping out the windows and running away.” Obviously, rigorous academic achievement was not the top priority when I arrived to teach in a Hawaiian community. The Administration was happy if I could just keep the students inside the classroom and the ladies who ran the office were happy, even openly amazed that we stuck it out long enough to learn a thing or two about teaching in a Hawaiian community.

The first reason I refer to historical studies documenting educational problems in Hawaiian communities is because that was the era (1960’s and 70’s) when I and other teachers at Nānāikapono, learned there was a fully developed Hawaiian culture that did not match the school expectations of individual academic achievement. The second reason is that now that I am getting to be of historical age myself, it is time to vouch for the fact we were keenly aware of the gulf between the world of the school and the world of the Hawaiian student’s family. In those days, there was a sense of urgency about dealing with the problems Hawaiians face in education. When Kamehameha Schools Research and Evaluation Branch states: “Research shows a lack of positive educational experiences that have endured for the past 50 years” (KSBE 2008, 2), I can personally corroborate 40 of those years.

If educational difficulties for Hawaiian students were the norm in the 1960's and early 1970's, has that trend continued? David Sing illustrates the longevity of this problem with his opening sentence:

Despite efforts since the early 1970's to raise their achievement in formal education, native Hawaiians, as a group, continue to rank among the lowest in the nation in terms of standardized test norms and academic performance in the classroom (Wery and Piianaia, 1973; Ikeda, 1982; Kanahale, 1982; Data Book, 1984). This fact is evident at all levels of education from kindergarten to college (Sing 1986, 1).

## **Educational Achievement of Hawaiian Students Mid-Twentieth Century**

When the first sentence in the preface of *Culture, Behavior and Education: A Study of Hawaiian-Americans* (1974) states: "This book is about Hawaiian-American youth, their culture and behavior and the problems they encounter in the public schools" (Gallimore, Boggs & Jordan, 13) it is apparent the difficulty Hawaiian students face is an issue several decades in duration. In this section, I will present evidence from several written sources plus memories of experience as young teachers in a Hawaiian community. My own memories plus those of Karen Roberts, another mainland recruit, will confirm that the pattern of Hawaiian underachievement is a long-standing problem of at least fifty years duration, for two reasons. Reason one is that forty years ago is when research was conducted in this particular Hawaiian community determining why

Hawaiian students had academic difficulties. And reason two was that was the time I happened to arrive in that very Hawaiian community and became aware of the problem.

The first reason is due to the amount of research in the 1960's centering on the difficulty minority groups (Afro-American, Puerto Rican, Chicano and Hawaiian) face in school. Previously those cultures had been thought of as being deficient, having "deficits – motivational, cognitive, linguistic, and the like" (Gallimore, Boggs & Jordan, 19.) Due to a series of studies in the 1960's and 70's it became accepted that these groups were not deficient but rather had fully-developed cultures. The difficulty in achievement arose "at the *interface of cultures*, which occurs in majority group-dominated classrooms occupied by minority culture students" (their italics) (Gallimore, Boggs & Jordan, 22.) In a brief span of years, three anthropological books *Studies in a Hawaiian Community: Na Makamaka o Nanakuli* (Gallimore and Howard) followed by *Ain't no Big Thing* (Howard) and also *Culture, Behavior and Education: A Study of Hawaiian-Americans* (Gallimore, Boggs and Jordan) were published. These three studies were researched and written by an interdisciplinary team of anthropologists and psychologists about the Hawaiian community where I was assigned as a beginning teacher.

Having major research projects launched in the community where we were assigned due to a "state-wide concern of agencies in the fields of health, education and welfare, recognized the necessity for a preventive program of social action in order to overcome the difficulties of the Hawaiian people which are reflected in court, health,

and school statistics” (Gallimore & Howard, 3) was a heady feeling. The choice of that community meant that it was considered representative of Hawaiian culture. Additionally, even though it was rich in culture, the community faced many socio-economic issues besides educational difficulties.

## **Educational Achievement of Hawaiian Students Today**

As Sing’s research suggests, educational difficulties for Hawaiian students continued into the mid-1980’s and are evident today according to the Department of Education’s data<sup>1</sup>. In accordance with the DOE’s request that researchers do not reveal exact identity of schools used for comparison, I will be non-specific in labeling a set of schools as being “Rural Area of Hawai’i with High Concentration of Native Hawaiian Students.” Two school complexes in a rural area which consists of two high schools plus their feeder schools have Hawaiian students comprising the majority of their population with one school nearly entirely composed (93.1%) of students of Hawaiian ancestry. Although I have developed charts of data for comparison, I will streamline this report by summarizing my conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> Data found on HIDOE’s Accountability Resource Center Hawaii web site: [http://arch.k12.hi.us/state/superintendent\\_report/annual\\_report.html](http://arch.k12.hi.us/state/superintendent_report/annual_report.html) (accessed 8 September 2010)

When schools with Native Hawaiian concentrations are examined, certain factors show a strong correlation with each other. Schools with high concentration of Hawaiian students also have high levels of “Free and Reduced lunch” rates. Students are granted either free meals (lunches and breakfasts) or meals at reduced rates if the parents’ income is lower than a certain level. This is a major federal subsidy program to assist students of low socio-economic status. According to Sharon Nakagawa, the Title I Program Specialist for the State of Hawai’i, this program has been in place since 1965 when the War on Poverty was launched. The free and reduced lunch rate is used to determine the poverty rate so that Congress could allot extra funds to schools with 40% or more students in need of free and reduced lunch assistance. Those funds are to be used “to impact the school’s ability to meet the needs of the students” (Nakagawa, 2/10/11.)

That is the official State Level explanation of the federal government’s Title I program. The “school level” interpretation is the free and reduced lunch rate determines if students or the school as a whole is considered to be “at risk” for educational failure. This assumes that families who are economically stressed are dealing with day to day issues without sufficient time, attention and resources to devote to their child’s education. Therefore this free and reduced lunch rate is used as an indicator of schools that have student populations that are educationally “at risk.”

## **Structural Difficulties that Impede Academic Success for Native Hawaiian Students**

A second characteristic of schools in those communities is that they also have a correspondingly high rate of teacher turn over. This challenge is a structural difficulty built into the educational system. It is one of the ways the public education system in the State of Hawai'i fails to meet the educational needs of Native Hawaiian students.

The DOE tracks the teacher turn-over rate for each of the complexes. A high school and all the elementary and middle schools that feed into that high school comprise a complex. According to the DOE's ARCH web site (Superintendent's Report, 28) the two complexes have low rates for faculty stability. Both complexes had less than half their teachers stay for more than five years, with one complex having 43% and the other 47% of their teachers stay for more than five years. As explained in the Superintendent's Report "Research suggests that schools experiencing high levels of staff turn over have difficulty establishing a culture of continuous curriculum improvement" (Superintendent's Report, 28).

The Superintendent's statement matches and reinforces my personal experience as a new teacher. In the first few years as a teacher, you are just trying to find your way through the personalities, resources and procedures of a school. If a teacher leaves that school before five years, he/she does not have a chance to effectively make use of that knowledge. From the point of view of the entire school's faculty, it is difficult to put changes into effect if the faculty is changing over from year to year. From the students' point of view, it is a revolving door of new, inexperienced teachers presenting curriculum inconsistently because they have not established

the relationships or learned how to access the resources of the school to present a consistent, effective curriculum.

By the time teachers in these rural schools start gaining effectiveness as teachers, they often transfer out to “easier” schools closer to town. The remoteness, lack of housing in the area, commuting time combine with the high cost of living in Hawai‘i to convince teachers they would rather work in the urban centers. Let me compare a complex (high school plus elementary and middle schools that feed into that high school) in the urban core that also has a high poverty rate. This school complex in an urban area has a student population that is nearly as economically disadvantaged but has more stable teaching faculty. In town, the students who are economically at high risk have 53% of their teachers stay at their schools for five or more years. Although not dramatically higher, it is a slightly higher level of stability thereby giving the students in urban areas, even though economically disadvantaged, a better chance at stable teaching staff who know how the school and the curriculum works. The staff members have established relationships within the school and have a “buy-in” on curriculum decisions. Those students in the urban area have a better chance at receiving instruction from teachers who know how to deliver a consistent curriculum.

An additional consequence of high teacher turnover is that teachers who are not fully qualified are hired because personnel directors have to find someone to fill vacancies. Often “emergency hires” without full credentials are placed in these rural areas with limited chance of being able to teach effectively. For the sake of this comparison, we are looking at secondary teachers teaching core classes (English, math, science and social studies.) To provide comparison, let us look at Honolulu district for the qualifications of their teachers. There are six complexes within Honolulu (based upon the high schools) with rates varying between 74% and

97% of their teachers who have met federal standards as “highly qualified”. Comparing two complexes, one complex has 81% of its secondary teachers “highly qualified” and has a good representation of credentialed faculty. But the other rural school has only 46% of its secondary teachers certified as “highly qualified” (Vorsino, 11/29/10.) Since student academic achievement is related to teacher qualification level, the academic chances for the students in those two rural complexes with a high concentration of Hawaiian population are being short-changed.

The Kamehameha Schools, Research and Evaluation Division confirm the disadvantages with which Hawaiian students are coping by assessing the certification rates of teachers. Their research team divided schools into those with less than 25% Hawaiian students, those with between 25% and 50% Hawaiian students and those with over 50% Hawaiian students. Schools with low and mid-rates of Hawaiian student population have similar levels of teachers without full certification (14.0% and 14.2 %.) However, at schools where the majority of students are Hawaiian, the rates suddenly jump to 25.9% teachers with either partial or provisional certification (Kamehameha Schools 2009, 5.) Even though students might rise above one or two disadvantages, factors start piling up making the chance of succeeding educationally less and less attainable. If Hawaiian children in rural areas are coping with economic pressures on their families and high turn over rates among their teachers who often are not fully credentialed, how well do these Hawaiian students and their schools achieve?

The No Child Left Behind Act became law in 2001, with testing to determine whether schools made “Adequate Yearly Progress” commencing in the spring of 2002. By the time of the research period, there had been nine years of assessments rating the performance of students as individuals and schools as a whole. If a sufficient number of students meet or exceed

proficiency in reading and math (plus graduation rates), then a school is judged to have met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP.) Schools that meet AYP are rated as “In Good Standing, Unconditional.” For the first few years, the benchmarks for meeting AYP were lenient, but as the years went by the benchmarks of students who need to meet or exceed proficiency have been raised every three years. Consequences for not meeting AYP have become increasingly harsh. As Karen Knudsen (Second Vice President of Board of Education) explains “so many aspects of the law as it’s currently written are punitive in nature” (Mariani-Belding.)

Including the spring 2010 No Child Left Behind test results, nearly a third (32%) of the schools state wide achieved “In Good Standing, Unconditional” rating. However, none of the schools in the two complexes with high concentration of Hawaiian students did. At the other end of the eight rung ladder of NCLB Sanction Status are schools that have failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress repeatedly until they slid their way down the sanction status into “Restructuring.” As of the 2010 assessment results, nearly a third (32%) of the schools state wide are in “Restructuring.” Unfortunately the schools in those two rural complexes with a high concentration of Hawaiian students had more than double (77.7%) the percentage of schools in “Restructuring.”

As these statistics indicate, one big improvement is that we now have readily available statistics of test results on web sites accessible to all with internet access. These statistics are presented as percentages and graphs as well as being summarized in the Superintendent’s report. Instead of sweeping rhetorical questions such as: “Why

do children of Hawaiian ancestry experience so much difficulty in the public schools?” (Gallimore and Howard, 28) we now have the capability of analyzing the academic difficulties specifically. Other than being better at quantifying the academic difficulties are the difficulties themselves any less? Unfortunately, that does not seem to be the case.

Taking all these results into consideration, it is safe to say that students of Hawaiian ancestry are continuing to struggle academically, as individuals and the schools they attend. That rhetorical question “Why do children of Hawaiian ancestry experience so much difficulty in the public schools?” was posed by Gallimore and Howard in 1968 in the *Studies in a Hawaiian Community: Na Makamaka o Nanakuli* study for the Bishop Museum. A better question would be “Why after major anthropological studies in the 1960’s and 1970’s have determined that students of Hawaiian ancestry have so much difficulty in the public schools are they continuing to struggle forty to fifty years later?”

Earlier in this introduction, one quote alluded to the “interface of cultures” (Gallimore, Boggs and Jordan, 23) being the reason behind the Hawaiian students’ difficulty in the classroom. This concept will be explored in more detail in the following chapter focusing on root causes leading to the struggle Hawaiian student face in the conventional public schools. In order to understand the underlying cause of Hawaiian students’ underachievement, I will give a brief history of the development of public education in the State of Hawai’i before a more thorough explanation of the conflict in

values between the dominant culture controlling the school system and the manner in which Hawaiian students are raised to act and learn in their home culture.

## **Overview of this Study**

In order to understand why students of Hawaiian ancestry are not achieving at a level commensurate with their intelligence, in Chapter 1 I describe what I propose as the two root causes: the history of education in Hawai'i and cultural reasons which conflict with the patterns of instruction utilized in the conventional public schools. An understanding of what is known as the Mismatch Theory reveals why Hawaiian students have struggled for decades in Department of Education classrooms. All of this is a prologue to the explanation in Chapter 2 of how Kū Kahakalau experimented with a few educational prototypes before realizing that charter schools are the most effective format for delivering a new style of education designed for Native Hawaiian students. Included in Chapter 2 will be a description of rise of the charter school movement in Hawai'i and the types of charter schools available.

Chapter 3 will explain how Kū Kahakalau and the founders of Kanu o ka 'Āina avoid the mismatch in education that students of Hawaiian ancestry experience in conventional schools. By designing culturally congruent curriculum at Kanu o ka 'Āina,

students are able to learn unencumbered by the dissonance that has held Hawaiian students back in the past and even today. Kanu o ka 'Āina aims so high, it sets a goal for its students to acquire full sets of both the Hawaiian culture and Western style academic skills.

At Kanu, they refer to the ability to be comfortable bi-culturally as being able to “walk in two worlds.” Conclusions in Chapter 4 will include a discussion on whether it is indeed possible for individuals or even organizations such as a Hawaiian charter school to “walk in two worlds”. Two continuing challenges Hawaiian charter schools experience when dealing with the educational power structure are the No Child Left Behind Act, and the assessments that are used to determine their effectiveness. How Kanu o ka 'Āina navigates between the world of Hawaiian culture (Hawaiian values and community organizations) and the requirements of educational authorities will be described. A brief summary of Kanu’s academic achievement compared with schools geographically and demographically similar will be included. All of these factors along with ideas of scholars who wrote about the metaphor of “walking in two worlds” will be used to draw conclusions about whether students at Kanu and Kanu o ka 'Āina as an entity can “walk in two worlds”.

## Chapter 1. Root Causes of Mismatch Problem

In the introduction, I stated that the problem driving this research study was that Hawaiian students experience difficulties in the conventional public schools resulting in underachievement. Now that we have the computer capability of crunching test scores for every subject and grade level tested for every school in the state, we can confirm that students in schools with a high concentration of Hawaiian population do indeed have academic difficulties. Of course this is unfortunate but the most distressing part is this is not a new phenomenon that arose with the assessments for No Child Left Behind. This is a longstanding problem of at least forty or fifty years duration.

As young bewildered teachers in the early 1970's we knew the Hawaiian students were not achieving academically and we knew there were scholarly research studies being conducted in our community producing authoritative results for what we knew intuitively. Anthropologists, psychologists and educators conducted research studies with remarkably similar "Statement(s) of the Problem." Here is one statement: "Problems in the Education of Hawaiians: Besides their poor socioeconomic status, Hawaiians have also not fared well as students in the Hawaii public school system" (Sing, 17.) That particular statement of the problem is from 1986, but it sounds just like the one written in 1968 in the *Studies in a Hawaiian Community: Na Makamaka o Nanakuli* study. Then decades later, the statistics on the Department of Education's ARCH (Accountability and Research Center of Hawaii) web site confirm that Hawaiian students

attend schools that have failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress repeatedly for enough years that their schools face the sanctions of “Restructuring.”

For the academic difficulties of Hawaiian students to be such a longstanding problem despite research studies explaining the reason behind the difficulty means it must be a very deeply-seated problem with deep roots. This chapter will investigate the two interconnected roots that I argue are the basis of this problem. First, I will present a brief history of the way education is presented in what is now the State of Hawai‘i, focusing on who determines the curriculum and for what purpose. Rounding out that discussion will be an explanation of what Dr. David Sing refers to as the Mismatch Theory. I will argue that the dissonance Hawaiian students experience between what is expected of them in the classrooms of conventional public schools contrasted with expectations of their families about how they are to act and learn, is the cause of the marked underachievement of Native Hawaiian students.

## **Native Educational Traditions of Hawai‘i**

Long before Europeans sailed out across the Pacific (or even the Atlantic) Ocean, Hawaiians effectively educated their children to become skilled, contributing members of their society. “The Hawaiians had a rich and extensive system of both formal and informal education” (Dotts & Sikkema, 14.) The type of skills taught would be

determined by the gender and class of the child (Kahakalau 2003, 39.) Knowledge of such topics as governance and warfare would be reserved for ali'i (chiefly) children (Kahakalau 2003, 38.) Children were guided into fields that they seemed to have an affinity for without the regimentation of all children being taught the same curriculum (Kahakalau 2003, 40.) There were many professions that required extensive training, including: kahuna (priests), astronomers, navigators, irrigation system designers and healers. In order to be trained as a canoe builder, kahuna (priest) or dancer of hula, courses of formal education lasting fifteen to twenty years were required (Dotts & Sikkema, 14.) The body of knowledge needed to master these fields with all the accompanying chants was vast and mirrors the length of study through college and graduate school in the Western system of schooling.

### **Introduction of Literacy-based Education by Missionaries**

Prior to written literacy, Hawaiians based their learning upon careful observation, memorization and practice (Chun, 10.) When the missionaries arrived in 1820, since they were Protestant missionaries their goal was to bring the Word of God to the Hawaiians. Therefore, setting the orthography for the written form of Hawaiian language and bringing basic literacy to the Hawaiian populace were of primary importance. Hawaiians were fascinated by learning to read the printed word and the

technology of printing (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2011b, 10.) Large numbers of Hawaiian adults readily acquired a simple level of literacy in Hawaiian language by 1832 (Dotts & Sikkema, 18.) Considering that thousands of Hawaiians attended schools to learn to read while only a limited number of missionaries were available, Dr. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua reasons that most of the teachers from the mid-nineteenth century until the end of that century had to be Native Hawaiian teachers (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2011b, 11.)

Despite the Hawaiians' eagerness for the written word, there was something insidious embedded within the education presented by the missionaries. Underlying religious beliefs and the missionaries' attitude towards the Hawaiian people must have been part apparent to Native Hawaiian students. Although the missionaries came to Hawai'i with full intention of helping the Hawaiian people their appraisal of the Hawaiian personality tainted their efforts at education. One of the more gracious of the missionary wives' journals was written by Laura Fish Judd, who often described Hawaiian ali'i (chiefs and chiefesses) with affection although some bemusement. But even she explained her goal as: "To help these degraded beings up and out of the depths of their heathenism;" (Judd, 45.) Other missionaries did not feel the balancing affection mixed with their sense of superiority over the Hawaiian people. Hawaiian philosopher, Manulani Meyer writes: "Mostly, I am overwhelmed with the amount of written materials that condemn, dismiss and disregard an entire race of people" (Meyer, 20.) Missionary attitudes viewing Hawaiian people as ignorant and inferior permeated educational instruction in Hawai'i from the 1820's onward.

Since missionaries wanted their own children to be educated in the finest available Western-style schools (without sending them back to New England) “select” schools were created, with Punahou the first in 1841. “Select” schools, attended by missionary and hapa-haole (mixed Caucasian-Hawaiian) children where instruction was presented in English, led to the “two-class” system of education we have had in Hawai‘i until today (Dotts & Sikkema, 20.)

Gradually as the nineteenth century progressed in Hawai‘i, haole (Caucasian) missionaries, doctors and businessmen cemented their control over Hawaiian law, private property, business and education. With the development of plantations growing labor-intensive crops, thousands of workers were brought in from China and Japan. By the end of the nineteenth century Hawaiian, Chinese and Japanese children attended public schools while the haole children of the plantation managers and owners attended private (formerly known as “select”) schools. By 1893 when the haole businessmen dethroned Queen Lili‘uokalani, the Chinese and Japanese were considered a threat who might challenge the controlling grip the haole had on Hawai‘i (Dotts & Sikkema, 42.) There was now a multi-ethnic population in the public schools, which the Caucasians controlled but did not have their own children attend.

In 1896, the use of Hawaiian language was legally banned in the classroom with English becoming the official medium of instruction. For the last half of the nineteenth century many Hawaiian parents had wanted their children to learn English to give them an advantage. But once Hawaiian language was formally banned, anyone who spoke

Hawaiian at school was punished and humiliated. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the Kenyan author, analyzes the violence done a culture when the language of the home is banned and the language of the colonizer is instituted as the official language of the school. He refers to this imperialistic tactic as a "cultural bomb to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages" (Thiong'o, 3.) No longer is learning to write a matter of putting the spoken language down on paper. The harmony between spoken and written words has been broken as "the association of the child's sensibility is with the language of his experience of life" (Thiong'o, 14.) Substituting the colonial language for the home language is a tactic designed to produce "the destruction or the deliberate undervaluing of people's culture, their art, dances, religions, history, geography, education, orature and literature, and the conscious elevation of the language of the colonizer" (Thiong'o, 16.)

It does not matter whether the substitution of English is for Gĩkũyũ in Kenya or for Hawaiian in Hawai'i, the effect is the same. It is all about the "domination of the mental universe of the colonized" (Thiong'o, 16) which results in alienating the child's world of the home from the world of the school. While the colonizer's language is elevated as the language of achievement and literature, the home language is associated with "low status, humiliation, corporal punishment, slow-footed intelligence and ability or downright stupidity, non-intelligibility and barbarism" (Thiong'o, 18.) Without a doubt, banning the use of Hawaiian language in the classroom depressed

Hawaiian students' morale and sense of efficacy as learners during the twentieth century until the lifting of the ban in 1978 by the Constitutional Convention.

What was once the Kingdom of Hawai'i before the overthrow of the Queen became the Territory of Hawai'i in 1900. From then until World War II changed the power dynamics between the ethnic groups, Hawai'i was under the political and economic control of haole (Caucasian) businessmen with the economy revolving around the sugar plantations. The governor appointed the superintendent and the Board of Education resulting in "an extreme form of centralization that is not typical of other public school systems in the United States" (Dotts & Sikkema, 42.) To a great extent with only recent, limited allowance of community input for SCBM (School Community Based Management) and public charter schools, this pattern continues to this day.

## **Education in Twentieth Century Hawai'i**

During the Territorial years, the balancing act of how to use the public schools to Americanize students demonstrated a considerable amount of contradiction. Men who had the political/economic control of the islands were running the islands' education system. They wanted to believe in and teach about American democracy, but still continue to be in control. They wanted to educate youth to grow up to be good workers on their plantations but it was dangerous to educate them too much. A plantation

manager reported: “Public education beyond the fourth grade is not only a waste, it is a menace. We spend to educate them and they will destroy us” (Dotts & Sikkema, 45.) The public schools were a decidedly two-class system with all educational decisions made by the Caucasian elite for the multi-ethnic, primarily non-Caucasian student body with the purpose of Americanizing them by ridding them of their home language, cultural identity and non-Christian religion (Dotts & Sikkema, 46.) The governor, superintendent and Board of Education used the public school system as “an instrument of social, economic, and political control” (Dotts & Sikkema, 47.)<sup>2</sup>

While those in political power in the early twentieth century wanted to Americanize the non-Caucasian students tipping their hats to the concept of democracy, they certainly did not want those youth to acquire the idea that they personally could come to influence or control political or economic systems. This style of educational management worked in the Caucasian power-brokers’ favor until World War II shifted the economic and ethnic power balance.

Throughout the twentieth century, education in the public schools was an increasingly multi-cultural endeavor. Early in the twentieth century, there were a scattering of American Caucasian students (2.35% of student enrollment), along with Hawaiians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Portuguese and Filipinos (Dotts & Sikkema, 58.)

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<sup>2</sup> That is not in the least surprising because recognition of the power public education has to shape society continues in today’s news: “Education is one of Governor Abercrombie’s highest priorities. He believes the success of our state’s future depends on the success of our public schools” (State of Hawaii, April 1, 2011.)

Towards the end of the twentieth century, adding to that mix were Samoan and Indo-Chinese students. At the very end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century, there was an influx of students from Micronesia (particularly from Chuuk and the Marshall Islands.) Throughout that century, Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian students were the highest percentage of students of any of the ethnicities in the public schools. In 1908, Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian students were the largest ethnic group with 33.45% of the public school population (Dotts & Sikkema, 58.) This trend continued until the present time. During school year 2009, 27.7% of the Department of Education's student population was either Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian (Superintendent's Annual Report 2008-2009.) Since 19.78% of the State of Hawai'i's population is either Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian (State Data Book, Table 1.38), that means Hawaiians are over-represented in the public school system. If native Hawaiian students constitute the largest ethnic group in the public schools, a little over one-quarter of the student population, what has the State of Hawai'i, done to assist this population?

Let us briefly look at the programs during the decades when I assert the Hawaiian student population was underachieving and that fact was known through anthropological studies in 1968 and two more in 1974. There were several attempts to boost the education of Hawaiian students by the state & federal governments and private agencies, particularly through trusts left by the ali'i (chiefs.) When we new recruits arrived in Nānākuli, the Model Cities Program was there working as part of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty. It worked on curriculum development of Hawaiiana

with a hands-on component but also math and language arts. Model Cities also provided demonstrations of effective techniques for the teachers.

The Reading Improvement Program for the Leeward District provided a Reading Resource Teacher for each school. My friend, Karen Roberts who had just finished her master's degree in education specializing in teaching reading, stepped into that resource position for Nānāikapono. These resource teachers were given extensive training by the State, which they in turn delivered to the teachers.

A federal program focused on Nānākuli and the schools on the Waianae Coast was the Title I program. Eligibility for this program is determined by the rate of students eligible for free and reduced lunch, therefore the Leeward Coast schools with their high rates of poverty benefited from the Title I program. Title I provided the funds to hire four to six extra teachers to supplement reading instruction. All students were assessed with students needing the most assistance pulled out of their homeroom to be given small group instruction in Title I. In the regular classroom, the homeroom teacher was able to concentrate on a narrower range of students whose reading skills were closer to grade level. With these additional teachers, Title I enabled the school to provide small group reading instruction so that all students, no matter their reading level, could be challenged and moving ahead in their reading. Additionally, Title I provided thousands of federal dollars to purchase sets of reading text books, workbooks and teaching aids to supplement and vary the teachers' reading instruction (Roberts, 4/13/2011.)

Kamehameha Schools developed its Project KEEP (Kamehameha Early Education Program) in the early 1970's aimed at providing reading using instructional techniques that match Hawaiian learning patterns (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1995.) Two DOE first grade teachers at Nānāikapono partnered with and were assisted by two Project KEEP resource teachers who were highly trained reading specialists. They not only trained those two teachers and more in succeeding years but also offered training opportunities for us DOE teachers to observe in their classroom (Roberts, 4/13/2011.) Project KEEP was making headway at Nānāikapono and other schools until it was abruptly discontinued by one of the Bishop Estate Trustees.

Each of these programs pumped funds and personnel into Nānāikapono and other Leeward District schools. Each had its own particular focus determining how their money was to be used but it was a yeasty mix of private, state and federal programs all trying to boost achievement. Neither Karen Roberts nor I know of any longitudinal studies that documented improved test scores. During the 1970's, teachers at Nānāikapono received a considerable amount of professional development increasing our skills at providing effective reading instruction. By the early 1980's many of us transferred to schools closer to our homes thereby reducing the strain of long commutes, but in the process, taking all that training with us.

Another highly successful program is Nā Pua No'eau created in 1990 and funded by Office of Hawaiian Affairs to bring enrichment in the arts to Native Hawaiian students from kindergarten through twelfth grade (Hawaii 24/7, 2011.) Students in this program

learn Hawaiian culture and develop their artistic skills thereby increasing their sense of themselves as able learners and people of value.

Far too often the State program offered native Hawaiian students was special education, because they did not learn in the same style as the literacy-based curriculum developed by the dominant culture. This is when and where I came on the educational scene in Hawai'i. Although I never applied to the State of Hawai'i, I was recruited at a Conference for Exceptional Children held in Chicago, April 4, 1970 where I am certain the recruiter would have attempted to sign up anyone attending that conference who could walk, talk and knew anything about special education. The need for special education teachers in Hawai'i was so great at that time.

Even though that was forty years ago, the need to bring in special education teachers continues in the State of Hawai'i. Far too often the solution to the different learning style of Hawaiian students was addressed by the State of Hawai'i by certifying a disproportionate number of Hawaiian students as disabled and needing of special education assistance. During school year 2009-2010, a school with a high percentage of Hawaiian students has one-fifth of its students (21.6%) certified as special education (according to the ARCH web site), which is significantly higher compared to the national average of 13.4% (National Center for Education Statistics.)

What is wrong with having students in classes with small class size, more teacher attention and less academic pressure? Students in special education are provided with

a skill-based curriculum that is limited and less rigorous than what is presented in regular classrooms. That is accompanied by lowered expectations and fewer high-achieving role models, resulting in diminished academic and post-secondary opportunities (NEA, 2.) The National Education Association has tracked this trend because disproportionality in special education is a concern not just for students of Hawaiian ancestry but nationwide for all students in non-dominant ethnic groups. “Disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in special education programs has been a national concern for nearly four decades” (NEA, 1.) It is interesting how that quote from the national teachers’ union notes the problem of special education eligibility rates for nearly four decades, refers back to the late 1960’s. This corroborates the Hawai’i based research studies of why non-dominant ethnicities end up being labeled as “disabled” in need of special education.

When students do not learn in the same style as the dominant culture who determines the curriculum, they experience difficulty achieving and all too often are labeled as disabled. Has the education provided Hawaiian students for the last half-century been totally ineffectual? Well, not entirely. Dr. Kahakalau in her dissertation describes several programs that have benefited groups of Hawaiian students. Many public schools offer ALC’s which are officially known as Alternative Learning Centers (and unofficially known as “Asshole’s Last Chance” before being sent to Detention Home)(Kahakalau 2003, 53.) These typically employ culturally-oriented and project-based learning strategies that are hands-on. Since this style matches many students’

learning needs combined with the lower student teacher ratio some students turn around from frustration and failure to starting to succeed. Unfortunately, even when students succeed in these programs it is a tempered success because many educators view these programs as watered down or lacking in academic rigor (Kahakalau 2003, 53.)

In 1978 when the Constitutional Convention for the State of Hawai'i was convened, a set of laws was enacted that opened the doors for programs beneficial to native Hawaiians. The 1896 ban on use of the Hawaiian language in the classroom was lifted when both English and Hawaiian were named as the two official languages of the State. Article X from this Constitutional Convention mandated "the State shall promote the study of Hawaiian culture, history and language and provide for a Hawaiian education program consisting of language, culture and history" (Kahakalau 2003, 48.) Public elementary schools started offering Hawaiian Studies or what is more commonly called "the kūpuna (elder) program" where Hawaiian elders bring lessons in Hawaiian culture and geography into the classrooms. These lessons delivered in an oral/aural manner often include crafts, singing and dancing. Even though there is little follow through by the regular classroom teachers leading this program to have the status of an "add-on" and not a core course, many students respond well to this style of instruction. This one period of the week might be the highlight of the week for certain children, when "they can spend (time) in an educational environment that respects and values

their native traditions and where they can learn more about their culture” (Kahakalau 2003, 50.)

For secondary education, the Article X mandate set the stage for a required Hawaiian history course (Kahakalau 2003, 50.) An additional benefit of Article X and making Hawaiian one of the official languages of the State of Hawai‘i, opened the door for the Hawaiian immersion schools. In order to extend the Punana Leo (language nest) private preschool programs, Hawaiian immersion classes were created in 1987 within the public schools. As students in these programs grew, more grade levels were added due to parental demand. Since 1999 whole graduating classes have completed their entire education from preschool through high school within the Hawaiian immersion program (Ka Papahana Kaiapuni Hawai‘i.) These programs are limited and do not receive as support as they should. There are only 1500 students in the Hawaiian immersions programs throughout all the islands (Ka Papahana Kaiapuni Hawai‘i.)

With the kūpuna (elders) who deliver the Hawaiian Studies lessons in the elementary schools employed only on a part-time basis (without the fulltime salary, benefits or classrooms/offices) they are on the periphery of the schools’ programs and not in the center of the decision making. But even though these programs are limited in numbers of students served and amount of support provided, they still reach certain students who do not respond well to the literacy-based curriculum presented in typical public school classrooms. Alternative Learning Centers, even though faculty members disparage the level of academic rigor in these programs, they do meet the needs of

some students not reached by the standard curriculum. Dr. Kahakalau recognizes the improved grades and attendance in these programs as indicative of the power of culturally based programs reaching students who are kinesthetic types of learners or those motivated to learn about Hawaiian culture. Even though these programs were seriously flawed by only reaching a small number, or because they lacked academic rigor or support from the department, they did make a difference in some children's school life (Kahakalau 2003, 52.) Analyzing the aspects of these programs that worked helped Kū Kahakalau shape the culturally-focused Hawaiian charter school she came to create.

## **Mismatch Theory**

When children enter classrooms where the teacher and curriculum matches their home experience, they embark upon their academic career as confident, eager learners. This has been my experience as a long-term educator and is confirmed by the anthropologists who conducted the *Studies in a Hawaiian Community: Na Makamaka o Nānākuli* study at the school in which I was placed upon arrival in Hawai'i. "If the school culture does not differ from the home culture, the child is usually able to make the transition from one to the other with little distress or difficulty" (Gallimore and Howard, 30.) Unfortunately the transition from home culture to school classroom is not a smooth and rewarding one for most students of Hawaiian ancestry. In the introduction

and first half of Chapter 1, I have shown through personal anecdotes, test scores and the history of education in Hawai'i, how education since the arrival of the missionaries, was designed for the purpose of "Americanization" (Dotts & Sikkema, 47) of Hawaiian and other non-Caucasian students.

While employing curriculum that reflects the Western values and intention of Americanizing the Hawaiian students, certain instructional techniques run counter to Hawaiian cultural sensibilities. These are the ones that contradict how Hawaiian students are taught at home to learn and behave and so put them at a disadvantage in the classroom. In this section, I will examine what Dr. David Sing refers to as the "Mismatch Theory" because of the disconnect between the way Hawaiian cultural values prescribe how children are to learn with the typical instructional techniques in the conventional public schools the end result is lowered academic achievement amongst Hawaiian children. Included in the following discussion will be a few specific cultural contradictions illustrating the mismatch causing tension within Hawaiian students.

Dr. David Kekaulike Sing, has been director for Nā Pua No'eau at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo for thirty years. As a native Hawaiian, he was one of only three professors of Hawaiian ancestry on the faculty, when he arrived. With the longest tenure of any of those with Hawaiian ancestry, he has the perspective to reflect upon his own experience and view the educational careers of other Hawaiians over an extended period of time. Theory for this section will be based upon interviews with

Professor Sing, his dissertation and anthropological studies on education in Hawaiian communities.

Dr. Sing's own personal experience in education illustrates the difficulties Hawaiians face in the educational system. While David Sing was a high school student in Waimanalo, the guidance counselors told him that he did not have the ability to go to college trying to convince him to become a fireman, as many of his friends became. Fortunately, David knew that he had more inside of him than just that. When University of Hawai'i did not accept him, he took remedial courses. Later when in college, he had to take some courses over, so it took a long time to get through college. But he continued on at Claremont University, finally obtaining a doctorate. While in college, he met his wife, Nalani, who is also of Hawaiian ancestry. Nalani Sing is currently the principal of Kea'au Elementary School.

Even though the Sing family is academically and achievement oriented, their children have had as many educational struggles as David Sing experienced. He counsels his own children to ho'omau, to keep on, keeping on, as the only way for them to succeed in education. Dr. Sing argues that the more closely the family lives Hawaiian values, the more difficulty the children will have with the education system. Families who live traditional Hawaiian values expect certain things of their children, which are in conflict with what the schools are expecting of their students. This is what David refers to as the "Mismatch Theory." In his dissertation, he cites research studies from the 1960's and 1970's concluding that the difficulty Hawaiian students have in school was

due in large part to not being “receptive to the learning conditions because of its incongruency with how they learned at home” (Sing 1986, 22.)

### **Cultural Values that are Incongruent**

This section identifies a number of Hawaiian cultural values that conflict with the expectations in mainstream classrooms. Hawaiian children are expected to show respect for their elders and people in authority. One way of showing that respect is for the children to keep their eyes downcast, *maka’āinana*, in Hawaiian, which is also the word for the commoners (Pukui 1972, 54,) For Hawaiians, it would be extremely bold, challenging and rude for a child to establish and maintain eye contact. Unfortunately, many Caucasian teachers interpret a child’s looking down as appearing shifty or guilty. Sometimes they even demand “Look at me when I’m talking to you!” which puts the student in a horrible bind.

Hawaiian children are expected to learn by observing, *i ka nānā no a ‘ike* (by observing, one learns) (Pukui 1983, 129.) This results in the expectation that children will be “all eyes” with their mouths shut. Accompanying this is the injunction against being nosy, *mai nīele!* (Pukui 1972, 51.) Children are not supposed to pester adults with questions. This is considered intrusive for the child to impose upon the adult and it

might be dangerous in certain circumstances, such as launching canoes. Children are expected to learn by watching and when the adult offers the opportunity, the child may ask a thoughtful question. Besides, children are supposed to pa'a ka waha (keep one's mouth shut) (Pukui 1983, 282.) As cultural expert Malcolm Chun explains: "Instead of jumping to conclusions, it is better for one to reflect on all the options, putting the experiences of observing and listening together (Chun, 5.)

In the classroom, teachers, and even university professors, expect questions and observations as a sign that the student is actively attending to the lesson. A well phrased question about an apparent inconsistency, or a missing detail or a comparison, will demonstrate that the student is perceptive and keenly logical. Students who are incisive enough to point out these things impress most teachers and professors. They usually appreciate someone who participates actively so that the teacher does not have to lecture to an unresponsive group. Haole (Caucasian) students are typically the outspoken ones often dominating the class discussion. Hawaiian students have already learned to "Nānā ka maka; ho'olohe ka pepeiao; pa'a ka waha" at home (Pukui 1983, 248.) So the Hawaiian students come to school trained to "observe with the eyes: listen with the ears; shut the mouth," resulting in students ready to listen and take notes.

At first, students who just sit in class and listen, might seem "well behaved" and easy to teach. But it shortly becomes frustrating for the teacher to attempt to engage the students to no avail. It is even more obvious when there is a mix of ethnicities in the

class, leaving the teacher to assume the Hawaiian student(s) must be slow, unmotivated or inarticulate (Sing 1986, 27.)

From the Hawaiian student's point of view, it would be unreasonably risky to raise his/her hand to add ideas to a class discussion. Even if his/her ideas are correct and pertinent, he/she jeopardizes his/her relationships with his/her peers. There is an injunction in Hawaiian culture against being overly assertive, called: "Mai maha 'oi" meaning "Do not thrust the temple forward" (Pukui 1972, 54), which is interpreted as being a warning against being overly-proud and self-important. The same admonishment carries over into Pidgin English as: "No act", which means "stop showing off" (Simonson, no page numbers listed). "If a Hawaiian says or does something which suggests he is above the others, he has more power or influence, or his opinions are more substantive, then he is pursuing personal gain at the risk of embarrassing, annoying or hurting someone else" (Howard, 28). If the Hawaiian student's comments turn out to be right, he/she is still wrong. Actively volunteering the right answers calls attention to himself/herself causing the group to bring that student back into order with comments such as: "who do you think you are?" type of comments. Whenever Hawaiians are singled out for praise, it is considered bad form to accept congratulations for achieving something by their own effort. The proper way to handle praise is to deflect it by pointing out the major contributions and assistance provided by other people. Or, the accomplishment should be belittled as "no big deal." In this way,

accomplishments of all sizes from venturing a correct answer in a class to earning a degree should graciously be attributed to the support of family and friends.

Returning to Hawaiian students' internal debate over whether to volunteer ideas in class, if the answer turns out to be wrong, the Hawaiian student "Makes A" or "makes a fool of himself" (Simonson, no pages listed). It is embarrassing for students of any ethnicity to venture an answer that turns out to be incorrect. Haole (Caucasian) students shrug it off with an "oh well, I tried" attitude. But for Hawaiians, there is a tendency to minimize risk. The basic reason for the "Ain't no big thing" attitude is to minimize risk, so if a venture does not "pan out", there is a minimal level of investment. There is little hurt or embarrassment because not much effort was put forth to succeed in the first place. Underneath the appealing, carefree Hawaiian image is a strategy that avoids vulnerability and disappointment (Howard, 32).

One of the key Hawaiian values interfering with the pursuit of education is the valuing of affiliation over personal achievement. Relationships with family, friends and community organizations are top priority for Hawaiians of all ages. It is assumed that a Hawaiian's time, energy and resources should go into their relationships. Their sense of self-worth is based upon the strength and number of their relationships (Howard, 67). Hawaiians use their resources to share with others instead of accumulating wealth (Howard, 73.) Using resources to increase the family's social standing is a higher priority than investing in more education. As long as there is enough money and resources to provide a basic standard of living, then strengthening relationships is more important

than personal achievement in the form of college degrees or professional level careers. It almost seems selfish spending time at school on one's own personal achievement. For many Hawaiians, working to provide for the family and concentrating on family and friends is far more of a priority than spending years focusing on the individual achievement of a college or graduate degree. Hawaiian young people "are taught as they mature to measure achievement in terms of their contributions to the family" (Gallimore, Boggs and Jordan, 262.)

### **Summary of Root Causes of Mismatch**

There are hundreds of teachers in the public schools of Hawai'i, who are culturally sensitive to the learning preferences of Hawaiian students. Unfortunately, I was not one of those for many years. And I suspect there is a basic structural mismatch between the Western oriented teaching techniques typically employed in the conventional public schools of Hawai'i and the learning style of the Hawaiian students. When there are "majority group-dominated classrooms occupied by minority culture students" there are sure to be conflicts "at the interface of cultures" (Gallimore, Boggs and Jordan, 23.) Test results for Hawaiian students and schools with concentrations of Hawaiian students as presented in the Introduction testify to continuing conflict between cultures.

As my Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Margaret Maaka, explained to our seminar: “The main problem with education is that it is not innocent. Embedded in curriculum are other elements some of which are written, but many unwritten, some of which are spoken, but many unspoken” (Maaka, 2007.) The thought pattern of the ethnic, socio-economic group that designed the curriculum is contained within the curriculum, schedule, discipline and even physical characteristics (setting, architecture & furniture) of the school. Any student who matches the ethnic, socio-economic group of curriculum designers will have the cultural capital needed to do well socially and academically. Any student whose ethnicity or socio-economic group does not match the cultural capital or *habitus* (personal history and social positioning, as defined by Erickson & Murphy, 189) of the designers is not going to do well academically.

If this cultural mismatch with the resultant underachievement on the part of Hawaiian students has been an ongoing problem for decades, is there any way to resolve this conflict? In Chapter 2 and 3, I will argue there is a way to address the mismatch between the cultures by working with the home culture of the students. The curriculum aligned with Hawaiian cultural values allowing Hawaiian students to succeed academically that Kū Kahakalau and other founding parents of Kanu o ka ‘Āina charter school created will be described in detail.

## **Chapter 2. Charter Schools as Vehicles for Change**

Before a charter school was even a dream, there were several steps along the way. At each stage, Kū Kahakalau used Hawaiian language and culture to reach Hawaiian youth to convince them they could be active effective learners. Each program she taught in or developed, although partially successful did not change the quality of the child's education or life, until the creation of Kanu o ka 'Āina Public Charter School. The history of this initiative will be tracked until the development of an entire Hawaiian focused system of pedagogy from primary and elementary through secondary education and beyond was created. This chapter also includes the reasons why separate charter schools, not a program in the mainstream public schools, are the most effective format for a complete unified new system of education.

### **Kū Kahakalau's Path to the Creation of a Hawaiian Charter School**

Starting out her career as an educator, Kū Kahakalau taught Hawaiian language in high schools, first on O'ahu and then on the Hāmākua Coast of the Big Island. Many of the students in her Hawaiian language class were motivated and bright. But it was disappointing when her students failed their other classes or dropped out of school (Bolante, 44.) When she encountered them working at a grocery store after dropping

out or getting pregnant, she pondered how students who were such good students in her class could do so poorly in their other school work.

Deciding to expand her efforts, Kū developed a summer program featuring Hawaiian immersion in a month long camp called Kūkulu Kumuhana (pooling our strengths for a common purpose.) This program allowed students to learn Hawaiian cultural traditions in an outdoor environment, and was so successful it expanded to various Big Island locations plus Maui.

Realizing that learning the Hawaiian language by itself was not sufficient to ensure success for Hawaiian high school students, Kū became aware she had to create an entire environment around Hawaiian traditional practices. Since Kū had started her doctoral studies at The Union Institute a few years prior to this time, she had enough academic credentials to launch a Hawaiian school-within-a-school at the local high school as part of her research. Despite promising results in the Kanu o ka 'Āina Hawaiian Academy, Kū was concerned that the faculties of rural schools can be unstable due to frequent turn-over. Additionally it was impossible to guarantee assurance of continuing administrative support for the Hawaiian Academy.

Kahakalau also knew that any program aiming at high school aged students, no matter how successful would be “too little too late.” By that stage of their academic career too many Hawaiian students were disengaged from academic life, feeling they were not real student material. Far too often Hawaiian high school students were

several or even many years behind in academic areas. Starting a program at high school level results in playing a game of “catch up” with students so far behind it is impossible to offer an academically rigorous program. Kū knew a school does not have the chance of succeeding with a quality program unless, it reaches students early enough to lay a solid academic foundation.

Knowing that she would have to expand her efforts for her students and also for her two young daughters who would soon reach school age, Kū formed a group of Hawaiian parents who felt the present educational system was not working for their children and wanted a better choice. Waimea in the center of northern Big Island was chosen because of its Hawaiian population and orientation. Using and extending the name of Kū’s original school-within-a-school, Kanu o ka ‘Āina Learning ‘Ohana, this parent group founded a non-profit organization called KALO. This acronym refers to the taro plant which is the legendary elder sibling of the Hawaiian people. Although Kū initiated the founding of this committee, there were many founding mothers of KALO and Kanu o ka ‘Āina, including Taffi Wise, Zanette Johnson, Val Hanohano, Nancy Levenson, Keōmailani Case, Ana Kaho‘opii, Margaret Becka and Jan Espere plus one founding father, Kū’s husband Nālei Kahakalau (Hanohano, 2011.) This group helped establish Kanu with several remaining till today in devoted service to Kanu, continuing to help guide its growth and working full time for either Kanu or KALO.

While Kū was developing the prototypes for her charter school in the early to mid-1990's important developments in educational reform were coalescing in Hawai'i and across the nation.

### **The Start of Charter Schools**

Across the country in the 1990's, parents were banding together dissatisfied about how little control they had over the schools, how non-responsive the schools were to their needs. They wanted to have some choice in the style of education for their children, hopefully in a smaller more personalized style (Lockwood, ix.) Although these parents came from varied backgrounds including homeschoolers or Christian fundamentalists (Lockwood, vii) or members of minority groups, they still wanted public education, but with some viable choices. They wanted "independent schools" that did not do business as usual nor embody the same level of bureaucracy. In 1988, when the President of the American Federation of Teachers, proposed an idea of "schools of choice" that concept resonated with many parents and educators. The charter school movement constitutes one of the most significant efforts to reform public education by creating schools that are semi-independent with autonomy over their curriculum and yet accountable for their academic and financial performance (Buckley & Schneider, 1.)

And so, the first charter school opened in Minnesota in 1991. Sometimes called “alternative schools” and sometimes called “magnet schools”, these public, though semi-independent schools spread across America (Brouillete, 4.) Anne Lockwood, an educational policy analyst considers the 1990’s to be the Charter Schools Decade. Public education reform via charter school legislation including the spread of new charter schools continued on the following decade. By school year 2009-2010, there are only “eleven states without charter school a charter school law” (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools 2006-2010.) There are now 4,936 charter schools, which constitutes 5.1% of all public schools with 1,665, 779 students which is 3.4% of all the public school students” (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools 2006-2010.) The Hawaii Charter School Network describes the current charter school scene as having “Over one million students (1,074,809) attend charter schools with diverse organizational structures, philosophies and programs” (HCSN 2010.)

In 1994, three years after America’s first charter school, Hawai’i opened the door for charter schools by granting the right for up to twenty-five schools to convert from already existing public schools to what was called at that time “student-centered schools” (Fukumoto, 7.) These schools later became known as “conversion schools” with Wai’alae and Lanikai as the first two schools in Hawai’i “converting” from being conventional schools into new status as charter schools.

Kahakalau and her group of founders recognized charter schools as a viable format for their plans of a new style of education. They lobbied the legislature for

expanded charter school opportunities beyond just conversion schools. In 1999, a law allowed community groups that had developed a coherent DIP (Detailed Implementation Plan) to apply to the Board of Education for a charter to start their own school. Since Act 62 came at the turn of the millennium, the schools it created were known as New Century Charter Schools. They could become charter schools through either of two processes: as a “start up” school being created anew or as a “conversion”, converting from an existent public school to a charter school.

## **Reasons for Charter Schools**

As the doors to becoming a charter school opened wider, another twenty-three charter schools, including Kanu o ka ‘Āina received their charters within the next two years. By the time school started in 2001 there were twenty-five charter schools including the two “grandfathered” (because they were grandfathered in under the law) charter schools, Wai‘alae and Lanikai. Out of that second batch of charter schools, a little more than half (thirteen) were designed around Hawaiian language and culture. One of the main reasons behind the creation of charter schools is to allow sufficient autonomy so that innovative curriculum and a new school culture can be brought to life. Taking the reasoning one step further, they thought that if these strategies prove to be effective, they might be incorporated into the regular public schools or possibly more

students will gravitate to that innovative school. A little healthy competition for students might be generated as parents and communities notice which schools are most effective in assisting students. When students and their parents choose a charter school they stay within the public school system and without having to pay tuition as they would a private school.

The second reason for charter schools is to provide “safe harbors” for students that the typical school has not well served (Fukumoto, 9.) In my years in the DOE, there seemed to be certain populations such as kinesthetic learners, gifted and talented students (particularly gifted and talented students with attention deficits) and certain ethnic minorities (such as the Micronesian as well as the Hawaiian students) that do not thrive within the DOE because their learning styles do not match the style of instructional delivery. Act 62 allowed community groups to work together to determine what youth in their area needed in order to succeed educationally. As shown in the above statistics on educational and socio-economic status, Hawaiians have not fared well in accessing the education needed to thrive in twentieth and twenty-first century life. The continuing struggles of Hawaiian people are particularly distressing, since research in 1968 determined that instead of “believing that the child should be changed” (Gallimore & Howard, 30), “the (school) system must prepare itself to serve the community for which it operates” (Gallimore & Howard, 32.) And unfortunately, those adjustments have not been forthcoming within the mainstream public schools of Hawai’i.

## **Types of Charter Schools in Hawai'i**

As of 2010, there are thirty-one charter schools in the State of Hawai'i spanning a wide variety of missions, grade levels and curriculum styles. Lynn Finnegan, the Executive Director of the Hawai'i Charter Schools Network, described them as "The 31 flavors of charter schools" (Finnegan, 2011.) Each charter school chooses different age/grade levels that match its mission. Some are strictly elementary while a few charter schools span both elementary and middle school. Only one charter school is strictly middle school, Waimea Middle Public Charter School, because it converted from middle school already in existence into a charter school. A few charter schools span secondary education including both middle and high schools. Nine charter schools including Kanu o ka 'Āina wish to mold students' entire elementary and secondary education span from kindergarten through twelfth grade.



Figure 1

Map of 31 charter schools throughout State of Hawai'i spanning from Kaua'i in the west to the Big Island in the east. Note that some charter schools are in such close proximity that their bubble markers overlap.

This map is used with permission of Charter School Administrative Office.

As stated above, in order to be granted a charter, a community group must develop a mission and Detailed Implementation Plan (DIP). Therefore, each charter school is designed around a mission of how they think they will best meet the needs of students in their community. Some are based upon a style of learning. Some are entirely on-line and some are hybrid on-line with certain amount of face to face classroom learning. A few schools focus their curriculum around certain content areas such as environmental sciences.

## **Charter Schools with a Hawaiian Cultural Focus**

There are currently fifteen or nearly half of the 2010 set of thirty-one charter schools in Hawai'i whose mission includes promoting Hawaiian language and culture. These Hawaiian focused schools include both immersion and bilingual instruction delivery schools. There are four charter schools where Hawaiian language is heard throughout the entire day for instruction, written materials and conversation. Then there are other charter schools focused on Hawaiian language and culture where the primary language is English with a considerable amount of Hawaiian words and concepts interspersed into the flow. Schools in this bilingual category include the focus of this study, Kanu o ka 'Āina.

Although all communities banding together to create a charter school want something different and better than what is offered in the regular schools, for Hawaiians, having "Schools of Choice" represents an effort to fulfill a deeper need. Hawaiian leaders, visionaries and community groups are trying to recover from generations of colonial education. A few Hawaiian leaders and visionaries who were tired of the years of dismal test scores from schools with Hawaiian populations knew they had to act. They knew the problem was definitely not because Hawaiians were incapable of learning, it was because the way the education system was set up put Hawaiians at a disadvantage (Gallimore & Howard, 30.) If they could create a school where the curriculum was aligned with the way Hawaiians traditionally learned it would

start to reverse the decades of failure and remediation thereby allowing students to thrive (Kahakalau 2003, 179.)

By declaring their own vision, mission and curriculum aligned with their cultural values, Hawaiian leaders asserted their right to indigenous self-determination as set forth in the Coolangatta Statement. At the World Indigenous People's Conference on Education that was held in Hilo in 1999, a group of indigenous educators drafted a statement asserting that due to the impact of colonization, indigenous peoples have not done well in colonial style education. Indigenous peoples have a right to not only access education but also design education aligned with their beliefs and culture (ANKN.) What is being developed in the Hawaiian charter schools is also being developed by First Peoples across the continental United States and Canada. This asserting of their right to create their own education based upon their culture is a step along the path towards regaining sovereignty. Stepping back from what is offered by the public education system and saying "No thank you, it really has not worked for our children and we have an idea that we think is going to better meet their needs" is a very bold step. This daring step has met with a variety of different reactions from the community and the people in positions of educational power. Nearly always there is surprise, sometimes mixed with delight and congratulations. Often there is skepticism about whether small community groups truly have the wherewithal to make this work sometimes that is tinged with hope for their success and sometimes tinged with expectation of their impending failure. All too often there have been promises of help from the state that

have not been forthcoming. And yet, Hawaiian charter schools although struggling with facilities, lack of financial support, continue to exist. Some such as Kanu have reached their tenth anniversary with others close behind and many with waiting lists.

Now that Hawai'i's grandfather conversion charter schools are fourteen and fifteen years of age with the start-up charter schools ten years of age, there is a wide variety of charter schools in Hawai'i. There are different curricula, philosophies and styles of instructional delivery. The cadre of Hawai'i's current thirty-one charter schools spans the island chain from the west coast of Kaua'i to the east coast of the Island of Hawai'i. Although a few are located in urban areas, most are in rural communities with twelve on the Big Island.



Map #2

Close up map of the charter schools on the Big Island. Note that there are two charter schools in Waimea: Kanu o ka 'Āina and Waimea Middle School.

Map used with the permission of Charter School Administrative Office.

Out of the 289 public schools in Hawai'i, the thirty-one charter schools represent 11% of Hawai'i's public schools (Superintendent's Report, 19.) However, since most of the charter schools have small student enrollment, it is more accurate to compare the

number of students. On the DOE's Count Day in October, 2009, there were 7,819 charter school students out of a total of 170,830 representing just under 5% of the public school students in Hawai'i (Vorsino, 10/22/10.) Of the thirty-one charter schools, fourteen or nearly one-half, have a Hawaiian cultural focus. According to Francine Murray reporting for OHA (Office of Hawaiian Affairs), there are "nearly 3,000 children who are mostly Native Hawaiian" in Hawaiian-focused charter schools (Murray, 4.) Since Kamehameha School's Research & Evaluation Division reports that in 2008, 88% of students at Hawaiian focused charter schools are of Hawaiian ancestry, that means 2,640 students out of a total of 7,819 in all of Hawai'i's charter schools are Native Hawaiian. That means 33.7% of the public charter school students in Hawai'i are of Hawaiian ancestry, which is higher than their 27.7% representation in the public schools state wide.

The large percentage of charter schools that are Hawaiian focused and the larger percentage of Native Hawaiian students in the charter school population than in the public schools indicates that Native Hawaiian parents and community members are tired of the status quo public education and eager to choose an alternative style of education. In our next chapter, we are going to take an in-depth look at how Kanu o ka 'Āina takes on the challenge of reinventing education for Hawaiian students. It is easy to complain about what is wrong and should be changed in the mainstream schools. But it is an entirely different level of responsibility to build an educational system from the ground up. While not an all-encompassing description of Kanu o ka 'Āina the

following highlights how this innovative school embeds Hawaiian culture into the curriculum.

## Chapter 3. Curriculum as a Carrier of the Culture

Returning to Dr. Margie Maaka's theory: the problem with education is that it is not innocent because embedded within the curriculum are other elements reflecting the culture of the curriculum designers. Can the opposite of that theory be used to assist Hawaiian students? Is it possible to avoid the educational struggle that has typically characterized their school experience for many decades? By designing a new style of pedagogy that culturally matches the learning preferences of Hawaiian students, educators prevent the struggles thereby allowing Hawaiian students to thrive. This is the goal that Kū Kahakalau and the other Founders of Kanu o ka 'Āina New Century Public Charter School set out to realize.

In this chapter, I will analyze how curriculum is used as the carrier of the culture at Kanu. Elements of the curriculum that embody Hawaiian cultural values will be described in detail. Most of this chapter will be in an academic style of writing with episodes slipping into storyteller mode to bring the day-to-day experience of Kanu to life.

At Kanu o ka 'Āina, Hawaiian culture is the linchpin that holds all elements together. My definition of culture is the lens through which a person views the world (Edmonson, 2007.) But what matters most for this thesis is not how I define culture but how they at Kanu define it and use it as a platform to determine how to present education. This chapter will investigate the curricular features that are the carriers of

Hawaiian culture. Before exploring this topic in an academic fashion, I will present a vignette that brings to life how powerful and personal Hawaiian culture is at Kanu.

### **Hawaiian Names Vignette**

‘I,

Kahikolu,

Hi‘ilei,

Pu‘ililani,

Kaniela,

Hi‘ilani,

Kukuipahu,

Healohamele,

Kahala,

Keakealani,

Polanimakamae,

‘I‘inimaikalani and

Moanikealaonaonaonapuamaikahikomai,

are names found on class lists at Kanu o ka ‘Āina. Although the name Moanikealaonaonaonapuamaikahikomai with its thirty-four letters is rendered manageable in the classroom by using the shortened version of Moani, it is still distinctively Hawaiian. Many names are shortened and for some, such as ‘I‘i, the full given name is succinct. But even those who do not speak Hawaiian recognize the combination of letters, particularly the preponderance of vowels as being a name of Hawaiian heritage.

By using their Hawaiian names without switching to an easier or more generic English version, students and families show pride in their Hawaiian heritage. Unlike English names that tend to be non-specific, Hawaiian names are often highly individualistic with references to ancestors, places, personality traits and promises of who the youth might become. These names remind the students and all who encounter them of their ties to their community and those who have gone before. With so many students carrying vowel-laden, mellifluous names loaded with imagery and pride in Hawaiian heritage, it is obvious that Kanu o ka ‘Āina is a place where Hawaiian culture is alive and valued.

Dr. Margaret Maaka, Maori scholar and professor of education, defines “curriculum” as everything that happens at a school. At Kanu o ka ‘Āina all aspects

revolve around Hawaiian cultural values, whether it is age groupings, teacher teams, “protocols” at the beginning and ending of the day, behavioral expectations, discipline, content area themes, field trips, gifted/talented programs or instructional delivery styles. They all are designed to ensure philosophical alignment with traditional Hawaiian values. Some features might be as minor as blowing a pū (conch shell) instead of ringing a bell to start the day and announce the end of recess or lunch. And some might be as all pervasive as the behavioral expectations based upon ‘ōlelo no‘eau (Hawaiian proverbs.) But they all represent Hawaiian values, cumulatively adding a sense of grounding within the culture for the students, teachers, faculty and community.

This is a very different approach from the regular DOE schools that provide Hawaiian Studies for a period per week. At the elementary schools where I taught, Hawaiian Studies was presented by a kūpuna (elder) or makua (adult) who introduced students of all ethnicities enrolled in the regular public schools to “Hawaiiana”, which is the study of all aspects of Hawaiian culture. Students receive one or two periods (approximately 45 minutes to a maximum of two hours) per week with typical lessons revolving around learning Hawaiian words such as counting and color words, names of islands, animals, plants and colors that represent each of the islands. Hawaiian Studies teachers incorporate some songs, dances and crafts into their lessons. But no matter how much effort these Hawaiian Studies teachers put into their teaching, they are only part time employees in the elementary public schools and their input does not carry

much weight and their lessons always feels like an “add on” and not a core content area. As Ronna Bolante explains, in an article for *Honolulu* magazine: “How do Hawaiian-focused charter schools differ from other public schools? Hawaiian culture affects everything they do – what subjects they teach, where they hold classes, even how they discipline students” (Bolante, 44.)

The power of how Kanu presents education is by having all elements involving the entire school come together to form a cohesive whole. Dr. Kahakalau explains this unified approach in “Kanu’s Philosophy and Purpose” section of the Accreditation Report. “As a Hawaiian model of education, KANU’s name, mission, philosophy, values, pedagogical and organizational approaches, all place education in the context of Hawai’i’s native culture, our values, our relationships, and our historic realities. We chose to create a distinctly Hawaiian model, because we believe that our children deserve a quality education, one that prepares them for 21<sup>st</sup> century island living and global citizenship, and also gives them the skills to thrive as modern Hawaiians”

## **Behavioral Expectations as the Cornerstone of Hawaiian Cultural Values**

Dr. Kahakalau described the four behavioral expectations as the core Hawaiian cultural values upon which Kanu was founded. Founders of Kanu chose ‘ōlelo no‘eau (proverbs or wise sayings) as the distillation of the wisdom of the kūpuna (elders and

ancestors.) The four cornerstone values that embody how Hawaiians are supposed to interact with others include:

Aloha kekahi i kekahi: Love one another

Mahalo i ka mea loa'a: Be thankful for what you have

Kōkua aku, kōkua mai: Give and receive help

Mālama i kou kuleana: Take care of your responsibilities.

Kū continued explaining that the faculty and staff are to model these behaviors so that eventually these expectations will be internalized by the students. Of course, while people attempt to always embody these characteristics, they sometimes fall short. But the intent is to recognize these as the core Hawaiian cultural values to not only promote them to the students, but to live into them at the school. This is a far more holistic manner of presenting values than 'Character Education during 6<sup>th</sup> Period' as too often presented in isolated manner in the regular schools (Kahakalau, 2011.) These values passed down from kūpuna (elders and ancestors) are to guide the interactions of everyone at Kanu (Kanu o ka 'Āina, 15.)

Hawaiian values are not only evident in behavioral expectations, but also in the focus and the way curriculum is presented at Kanu o ka 'Āina. The following sections list and explain the Hawaiian values and how they are brought to realization at this innovative charter school.

## Education with Aloha

Supporting the entire foundation of all aspects of the school is the fundamental value of aloha. As illuminated by Kumu Hula (hula master) Olana Ai, “Aloha is the intelligence with which we meet life” (Meyer, 4.) Therefore, Kanu and other Hawaiian charter schools within Nā Lei Na‘auao present “Education with Aloha” endeavoring to awaken the aliveness of aloha in their students and to surround their youth with a caring, family-like environment (Nā Lei Na‘auao, 3.) By experiencing this almost-familial set of relationships at Kanu, where all adults see value in each child, sooner or later, each student comes to care about him/herself realizing they have gifts and the possibility of a fine future. But first before a youth starts to recognize his gifts, he has to feel safe and valued within the school setting.

Youth and their parents choose Kanu o ka ‘Āina for a variety of reasons. Some who are succeeding in mainstream schools or home schooling choose Kanu for the cultural focus or the encouragement to “think outside the box.” There is also a group of students who transfer in to Kanu and other Hawaiian charter schools having first none too successfully attended regular public schools. Many of those transfer students who were not successful at their previous schools, either academically or behaviorally bring years of frustration and limited academic progress with them into the charter schools. Some students respond quickly to the environment filled with aloha and some take a considerable amount of time to release the layers of anger and frustration that has built up. This has a major impact upon students’ academic achievement levels, their

willingness to approach academic tasks and their appraisal of themselves as learners. Many students enter Kanu feeling not very good about themselves personally and as students in part because of their previous experiences in school.

When filling out their application forms for re-admittance for another school year, several Kanu students and their parents focus on the feeling of aloha as a critical factor in their education. An eleventh grade female student wrote: “I went from not going to school and not doing any of my school or homework to participating in every class activity, helping fellow classmates with anything they didn’t understand, and getting an amazing report card. . . Just the amount of love and support that comes from everyone is what makes Kanu such a special school.” Later in her re-application form, the parents wrote: “We would like to thank Kanu for rescuing my child from becoming a high school dropout. . .”

In the keynote address at the Ku i ka Lono conference in March 2009, Dr. Kahakalau identified teachers having aloha as the single most significant difference students note between their experience in Hawaiian charter schools and other schools. While Hawaiian charter school students cite it as the most important factor, teachers in regular schools rate aloha or loving their students at the bottom of their lists of the things on which they need to concentrate. To teachers in most schools, loving their students seems far less critical than teaching the content in their specialty area. In fact, upon asking a teacher if their job is to love their student, many might look puzzled and state: “But my job is to teach \_\_\_\_\_ “ (fill in the blank with any academic content

area.) The idea of aloha being the critical component is so deceptively simple it is profound and it makes all the difference.

## **Family Orientation**

Kanu has built a community that is family oriented. All teachers and staff are referred to as “Auntie” and “Uncle” even when they have a doctorate and in other places would be addressed with deference as Dr. Kahakalau, Dr. Naughton and Dr. Hughes. Instead, all people around campus address them as Auntie Kū, Auntie Momi and Uncle Matt. For someone such as me who strives academically, that feels as if it shows insufficient respect for their academic achievement. For a while, I called Matt Hughes, “Dr. Matt”, which caused the kids to laugh for to them, he is just “Uncle Matt”. At Kanu, familial relationship titles take precedence over academic titles. By using these family terms, it changes the relationship from teacher – student to a deeper, closer relationship.

Val Hanohano, one of the founders of Kanu and a close confidante during my months at Kanu, helped clarify the reasoning behind the use of these family terms. The following paragraph paraphrases Val’s explanation (Hanohano, 2010.) “Kanu frames the relationships between youth and staff members in terms of the family. Our Hawaiian children are taught at a very young age to respect their kūpuna (elders) and their hānai

(adopted) 'uncle' and 'aunties'. By using familial titles, people at Kanu honor the high esteem Hawaiians have for the 'ohana (family), Hawaiian cultural values and Hawaiian ways of knowing. For some non-Hawaiian faculty members, it feels awkward to be called 'uncle' or 'aunty'. When they understand the respect and connectedness those titles engender and accept being called 'uncle' or 'aunty', they allow themselves to be seen as part of the family" (Hanohano 2010.)

On weekends when there are special events such as Thirty Days of Aloha parade, whole families show up with their child, who is the Kanu student. Mothers, fathers, other siblings and even babies attend with the Kanu student with a sense of wholesomeness out of an earlier generation. Teachers attended this parade and the Paniolo Preservation Society's evening event with their own children in tow. There is no separation between their life as a faculty member and their role as part of their own family. Most of the teachers at Kanu have their own children enrolled in Kanu. The only exceptions are teachers with children who have been accepted into Kamehameha Schools.<sup>3</sup>

All the students and their families know the teachers' spouse and children since they are highly visible within the community. This is in sharp contrast to my previous schools where teachers typically lived outside of the community and enrolled their own

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<sup>3</sup> Kamehameha Schools is a set of private schools that offer another model of Hawaiian education. For further comparison of Kamehameha Schools and Hawaiian Charter Schools, see Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (2005.)

children in either the top-rated public schools of good neighborhoods or private schools. For the most part (except for when I was at Barber's Point Elementary School in the 1980's where faculty and staff did have their own children attending their school), there is a separation between where teachers work and the community in which they live. At Kanu, there was no separation between faculty members' professional and personal lives, which demonstrated their confidence and commitment to quality education at Kanu.

Another example of the familial orientation at Kanu is their age groupings. Students are not segregated into single grade levels moving in isolation through the ranks, but in age clusters more like a family. In the primary grades (preschool through first grade) the age span can be relatively narrow while still giving a feeling of big brother, big sister, little brother, little sister relationships. Similarly at the elementary school from second through fifth grade, where there are two basic multi-aged classrooms of second-third combination and then fourth-fifth grade combination, the range is still within one developmental period. It is when students reach sixth grade and enter secondary education that the age span suddenly broadens out to include both middle and high school students.

At each of the four "projects", there is a cadre of students, some finishing childhood entering pre-adolescence all the way up to twelfth graders on the verge of graduating into young adulthood. When I first arrived at Kanu, I could not fathom how any teacher would be able to present lessons to such an extraordinary span of ages and

maturities. Even more mind-boggling than having seven grade levels (sixth through twelfth) in one classroom was having family members in the same class. In the Pu'ukapu Project, there was not only a brother-sister combination, but the teacher's own son was one of her students. In the Waipi'o Project, Nālei Kahakalau has both of his daughters as his students. None of these familial combinations would ever have been placed together in the regular public schools where the counselors attempt to separate youth who are related not just at a sibling level but even at a cousin level of relationship. Having these close relationships within the classrooms works at Kanu because one of the foundational values is to operate as a family unit with the younger children looking up to the older ones as role models and the older students being protective and helping with the teaching of the younger students.



In preparation for the Student Led Conferences, a high school student with experience leading his own conferences, helps a sixth grade student rehearse.

This exemplifies one of the Hawaiian proverbs that illustrates a cultural value: “Kōkua aku, kōkua mai pēla ihola ka nohona ‘ohana” (To give and receive help such is family life) (Nā Lei Na‘auao, 3.)

## **Intimate Relationship with the Land**

Being outdoors a fair amount of time is something that draws the attention of visitors. There are two reasons for that with one being minor and related to the physical set up while the other is a foundational Hawaiian value. Considering that facilities are not provided for start-up charter schools, the founders and directors of start-up charter schools have to be creative in acquiring, converting or designing buildings for educational use. Most of Kanu's facilities are temporary or make-shift structures and not the sturdy concrete block buildings with covered walkways of the "mainstream DOE" schools. As they cobble together whatever facilities are available, most students and teachers at Kanu work and study in a warehouse, pavilions or Quonset hut shaped tents or even a double-wide trailer.

There is only one structure at Kanu designed by Kanu that is used by the middle and high school students. Until the completion of their next set of facilities, elementary students study in make-shift facilities. Middle and high school students spend about half their time in Hālau Ho'olako, an award winning community center used for classes during the day. The rest of students' and teachers' time is spent in atypical structures not designed for education but converted for classroom use. These facilities are not connected to each other in the systematic manner that regular DOE buildings are. Just from a facilities point of view, students and teachers are exposed to the elements far more than students and teachers sheltered by "regular DOE" buildings. But this reason for increased time outside in the elements is only a logistical reason. There is an

underlying philosophical reason why the focus of education lies outside of the classroom.



The Hālau Ho'olako center built on Hawaiian Homestead Land is designed to blend into the Kohala Mountains. Until this facility opened in January 2009, all education was provided in borrowed or makeshift facilities.

In Hawaiian thought, people are related to the land, making the land part of the family. The Paoakalani Declaration explains “According to the Kumulipo, a genealogical chant of creation, Pō gave birth to the world. From this female potency was born Kumulipo and Pō’ele. And from these two, the rest of the world unfolded in genealogical order. That genealogy teaches us the land is the elder sibling and the people are the younger sibling meant to care for each other in a reciprocal, interdependent relationship” (Ka ‘Aha Pono, 3.) As the younger sibling, people should

demonstrate respect and mālama ‘āina (care for the land.) Since this is one of the most basic relational values for Hawaiians, it is listed at the top of “Foundational Characteristics of Indigenous Education” as developed by Nā Lei Na‘auao, Native Hawaiian Charter School Alliance. Under the category of nature, these characteristics of indigenous education are listed: “Nature is viewed as sacred, and familial, i.e. part of an individual’s/people’s identity” and also “Integration and interconnectedness of all beings including all elements of nature is recognized and fostered.” In her dissertation, Dr. Kahakalau cites Peter Hanohano in saying “For Natives, sense of place anchors their being and identity in who they are and their relationship to Mother Earth” (Kahakalau 2003, 73.)

At Kanu, portions of each school day are spent outdoors, especially for the middle and school students when they are in their “Projects”. Those occur during the weeks when they are in their homerooms or hui (groups) and not in “workshops” concentrating on language arts, math, health, Hawaiian language and physical education. Each of the “Projects” focuses on an aspect of nature or human’s relationship to nature and each hui (group) is located at an outdoor learning lab in an area of historic significance. As Manulani Meyer explains: “Culture, for Hawaiians, is in a context rich with history and environmental rapport” (Meyer, 32.) The locations of each of the projects are situated in “vibrant locations” as Dr. Kahakalau describes them leading to enriched opportunities for integrated learning.

For the students up at Pu'ukapu at 2,500 feet elevation, it is very chilly in the mornings during the winter months. Temperatures can be in the 50's with dew on the ground leading some people to question whether it is wise to have the students outside for protocols and meditation/centering time. Aunty Nicole explains that the weather with its chill, fog and characteristic rain that falls diagonally is part of what makes Waimea that distinctive place whose weather is often described in legends, chants and hula. She might lessen the amount of time they spend outside in the cold and counsel them about wearing jackets sufficiently protective for that weather, but she wants the students to experience that sensory knowing of Waimea. This is all a part of the kinesthetic knowledge leading to an intimate awareness of their particular place.

As someone accustomed to suburban life, I felt both refreshed being outdoors so much and also physically awkward at times. My typical footwear of high heeled sandals does not lead to confident walking over rough ground. And there were repeated incidents of a sunburned forehead due to insufficient coverage with sunscreen. But those are the types of experiences that eventually mold a city slicker into someone who is physically adjusted and adept in that particular setting. This is part of the kinesthetic knowing of a location. It has to be done outside moving from feelings of awkwardness until a person acquires a deep knowing at a sensory level what that place is like.

The two modifications I needed to allow me to feel physically comfortable in that setting were such minor changes. In local style Pidgin English, the adjustments I had to make were so "manini" ("undersized" often referring to fish, as if hardly worth the

catching of the fish or in my case the mentioning of the adjustments.) However, when a student studies and tracks the phases of the moon, learns the legends, chants and hula associated with that place, plus the name of the rain and plants specific to the area, then the student feels embedded into that landscape. By remembering the stories of the land, they restore the meaning these places hold in people's lives (Cummings, 6.) While lessons of this kind include intellectually oriented learning in the history, science and social studies, much learning involves the visceral learning of deeply knowing a particular area of land until a person feels a part of it.

Kanu students at the middle and high school level do much of their learning through a style of education known as either place-based or project-based learning. "For Hawaiians, knowledge for knowledge sake was a waste of time. Everything, absolutely everything had function" (Meyer, 57.) The students and teachers at Kanu seem to come alive when engaged in a project that is useful and relevant to their community. Since each hui (group) has a different location and focus, their themes differ resulting in focus on different projects. As "The White Paper" explains, each school (or in this case, Hui) is unique, shaped by its unique geography and culture" (Nā Lei Na'auao, 4.) The kumu (teachers) envision projects using the history and geography of their particular place so that the learning seems real to the students. A sense of authenticity surrounds the lessons presented without the artificiality that often accompanies lessons about places far away.

## **Project-Based Learning**

Leaving the analytical description behind, I am going to slip into storytelling mode to relate a series of activities that Pu'ukapu Project undertook over a period of three months. In the process of learning holistically, students experienced learning from several academic content areas combined together to provide a service to the community. Additionally, this project culminated in a writing assignment used as an evaluation. The following description is provided to show project-based learning at its best, making use of the characteristics and traditions of the area.

### **Project-Based Learning at its Best**

Planning started several months ahead of time for Pu'ukapu's big project. The Makahiki Festival would not be until mid-January, but Aunty Nicole held the beginning discussion the last week in September, which was right before fall intersession. They were at the end of the first academic quarter preparing for an event to be held in the third quarter. Project based learning often takes more time than following a textbook or doing worksheets, but Aunty Nicole was allowing time for her students to make the decisions on how and what to prepare for the Makahiki celebration.

Most of the students in her class had already experienced one, several or many Makahiki events in previous years at Kanu. Her class included students in both middle and high school from grades sixth through twelfth. Not only did her class span from childhood through adolescence, but there were long-term Kanu students as well as those who had recently transferred in from “regular” DOE schools. She had known in advance that she would have to rely upon a few of the seniors who had the maturity, leadership skills and sufficient cultural knowledge to be responsible enough to head a project. But first, it was up to the class to discuss and reach a decision about what it wanted to present. Aunty Nicole explained that the Makahiki Festival involving not just Kanu, but also the whole community and many other schools was coming up in mid-January. Of course, food is part of every Hawaiian celebration and would the class like to be responsible for preparing some of the food? If so, what types of food do they think they should present?

Within a few minutes, the class decided that they did indeed wish to be responsible for supplying certain food items. They knew that other grade levels were willing to contribute certain foods, but they wanted to prepare some dishes that were distinctly Hawaiian food items, not the contemporary “local” dishes, but the real Hawaiian food items from long time ago. The students suggested ‘uala (sweet potato), meat roasted in an imu (underground oven) and mamaki tea as the beverage. Therefore, three work groups would need to be created to handle those food items. Students were allowed to choose whichever group they wished to work on with Aunty

Nicole making sure the groups were balanced and each group had a highly responsible senior who could lead that group.

It took forty-five minutes of discussion for each group to rough out their ideas of what they wanted to present, what would be the steps of the procedures they would need to do and what supplies they would need. Most of the middle school students had never been responsible for a multi-step project where other people were counting on them to pull through. They mostly listened to the high school students brainstorm ideas, but the group leaders were conscious of pulling them into the conversation.

Following the small group discussion, each group got up in front of the class presenting the group's plans. The group that wanted to handle building an imu (underground oven) and roasting meat had partially formed their ideas but there were still some gaps remaining in their reasoning. They knew they could count on Uncle Gary (who was the grandfather of one of the student's and a member of the Kanu staff.) Since he raised animals and lived close to the school and was always willing to help, they thought he would be a likely source for an animal. They knew asking a rancher for a cow to roast would be too much of an imposition, so they proposed "asking Uncle Gary if we could borrow a calf – just a little calf." Of course, everyone could see the humor in asking a rancher if they could "borrow" a calf because after butchering and roasting the animal, it obviously would not be returned in the same condition as when "borrowed".

This is where the teacher's wisdom had to intervene. Not only did Aunty Nicole have to help mold each group's ideas of how to logistically go about their plans but also guide them in what was pono (the proper, righteous) method. Aunty Nicole guided this group and each of the groups in how to be honest and straightforward in soliciting help from individuals and businesses so that relationships in the community remain supportive and cordial. Their ideas were still in the rough draft stage but there was plenty of time to work out the details. Even to get to this rough draft stage, it took the entire afternoon to decide that they wanted to participate, what main food items they chose to be responsible for and a general idea of how to go about it. In the process, the students were making the decisions guided by their most mature classmates under the watchful eye of Aunty Nicole.

Later when talking to Uncle Gary, they did not have to ask to "borrow" an animal. Uncle Gary weighed the fact that since the slop left over from breakfasts and lunches at Kanu goes to feed his pigs everyday, he felt satisfied about donating one of his pigs for the Makahiki project.

Thanksgiving week is always a short school week, the Pu'ukapu class spent at least half of each of the three days of this week primarily focused on the imu (underground oven) project. On Monday afternoon, the whole class hiked down the road to the first house on the bend leading to the pastureland that borders Kanu. Uncle Gary had smoothed out a flat area in his back yard that would be easy digging for the underground imu. Before anyone started digging, Aunty Nicole gathered the students

into a circle to chant asking that they do everything in a pono manner so that this undertaking will succeed. Then five boys who had volunteered to be the diggers started digging in the sandy dirt.



Five alaka'i (leaders) dig the imu (underground oven) with Uncle Gary's guidance.

Using an o'o (Hawaiian digging stick) as a measurement tool, Uncle Gary determined that the pit was deep enough when about half of the stick was in the ground and half was sticking above the ground level.



Temukisa and Keakealani take careful field notes on each step of the process.

While the five boys who volunteered to be the workers did the physical work, all the other students had an assigned job. They were not allowed to be merely casual bystanders hanging around. They sat or stood on the periphery with paper on clipboards taking notes on the sequence of steps being conducted. The alaka'i (the leaders) who volunteered to do the work broke up wooden planks to use the boards as fuel for the fire placing them in the bottom of the pit. On top of the planks, they put in kiawe logs (from the Algaroba tree) that burn with an intense heat and then the rounded volcanic rocks that will do the actual cooking of the pig. They continued to pile lava rocks and kiawe wood until there was a mound above ground.

In Hawaiian cultural thought it is not proper to leave an open pit over night waiting until tomorrow when they would put the pig in it because an open pit is like an open grave that invites all the wrong spirits to come and take up residence. They covered over the pit with a tarp weighting it down with rocks and logs. Then all the students and the men from the community with cultural knowledge of how to properly dig an imu (underground oven) formed a circle around the covered imu. Aunty Nicole led the group in summarizing what they had done that afternoon and the steps they had taken to ensure that all was done in a pono manner, concluding the afternoon's work with chants.



With imu (underground oven) preparation complete, the group gathers for final thoughts and a concluding chant.

A pig sty stands in the corner of Uncle Gary's yard. Some of the students had been going over to check out the pigs and to teasingly tell the pigs "Guess what is going to happen tomorrow? You might as well have your last supper." Aunty Nicole gathered the whole class around the pig sty reminding the students of the need to mahalo (be grateful to) the pig who was about to give his life so that they could prepare the food for the Makahiki. The students turned sober and thoughtful after that.

When the time came on Tuesday for the butchering of the pig, Nicole allowed only the older boys who had volunteered to be present. That turned out to be a very wise decision because the pig continued to struggle even after being shot and having its throat slit. It was a hard death that was difficult to watch so it was fortunate to only have the older boys there. They worked on cleaning up the pig before scrapping off all her hair.



A middle school student watches as his high school classmate cleans the pig.

It was only when the pig was being made presentable did the girls of the class arrive for the rest of the tasks. After scrapping off all the hair, they gutted the pig removing the internal organs, being careful to remove the entrails intact. These entrails were made into a local delicacy called a “loco”. The students salted the pig using Hawaiian salt.

This project continued in stages for the three days of Thanksgiving week. I had the privilege of witnessing and photographing much of the process. One of the Pu’ukapu students with developing photography skills was asked to record all the tasks

needed to bake the pig in the imu (underground oven.) Hi'ilani Hanohano hovered over the action taking tight photos that later illustrated the article in Kanu's newsletter describing this project.



Hi'ilani's job was to photographically record the process for an article in the *Hunehune Kalo* (the weekly school newsletter.)

The wood including the kiawe (Algaroba) logs had been burning since mid-morning heating the lava rocks. The students put the red hot lava rocks inside the pig's

belly. By placing the pig on chicken wire and wrapping it around the pig, they were able to position the pig onto the hot lava rocks.

Then they started the covering process which is very important because it ensures that the pig steams properly. Students covered the pig with a thick layer of broken banana stalks and then another thick layer of kī leaves from the Cordyline plant. These layers not only retain the moisture and create steam inside the underground oven but they also keep the food dirt-free. Using soaking wet burlap bags, the students covered the mound of green layers surrounding the food. Dirt that had been piled on the side when the imu (underground oven) was dug was shoveled onto the burlap bags creating a thick layer that keeps the oven from smoldering.

Once covered the imu “was set”, but needed to be watched for the rest of the afternoon and entire night while cooking. A set of high school boys volunteered to keep watch over the imu making sure smoke leaks did not develop. If smoke started leaking, then the food could burn or a fire could spread. In case smoke starts to leak, it is the boys’ job to pack down more dirt on that area preventing erosion of the mound above the cooking pig. While it was still light, leaking smoke was easy to spot. But since the pig cooked all night the boys had to remain vigilant even in the dark. If they could smell smoke they had to use their flashlights to identify the source of the leak and cover it over.

On the Wednesday morning before Thanksgiving, the class assembled at Uncle Gary's to remove the pig from the imu. Everyone helped shred the juicy meat packaging it in plastic bags to be frozen for the Makahiki festival in January. With their three days of work, the students of the Pu'ukapu Project contributed to the success of the Makahiki festival. They provided the juicy kalua (steamed in an underground oven) pork prepared in the traditional manner to be sold as the main dish of plate lunches. By working together in a group effort on behalf of the community their efforts were aligned with deeply held values within the Hawaiian culture. Throughout those three days of hard work, I never heard any grumblings about how much work was expected of them. In Hawaiian culture where the focus is on group effort particularly for the benefit of the community, students are eager to contribute their energy and skills. Throughout the process, students had the opportunity to witness and participate in the proper method of making an imu which is becoming a dying art (Hunehune Kalo, 12/3/09.)

Not only did the students physically experience the process, but they had to keep a written log of each of the steps. Dr. Momi Naughton who team teaches with Nicole Anakalea in the Pu'ukapu Project assigned a fictional story of five boys who prepared a ceremonial imu for homework over the Thanksgiving weekend. She recommended that the students use their field notes to provide details for the stories due Monday after Thanksgiving. With this assignment, the hands-on experience led directly to an academic assignment based upon three days of vividly experiential

learning. While this was an academic writing assignment, it incorporated creativity and cultural knowledge making it truly authentic learning.

## **Protocols**

Framing each school day are “protocols” with which every day starts and ends. The Random House Webster’s College Dictionary defines “protocol” as “the customs and regulations dealing with diplomatic formality, precedence and etiquette” (Random House, 1065.) In Hawaiian charter schools, protocols are a formalized time of gathering everyone together for a time of centering the mind so that it is ready to focus upon instruction. This ritual continues from pre-contact times when students asked permission in chant to enter a hālau (school) to receive instruction from the teacher. The kumu would decide if the student was sufficiently focused and prepared to make use of the instruction.

Continuing this tradition at Kanu and other Hawaiian charter schools, students assemble at the sound of the pū (conch shell) each morning to chant their request to be allowed inside to “learn of the hidden meanings.” Honor is paid to the ancestors of the Kohala area where Kanu is located and all ancestors back to the first Hawaiian people. Chanting, students characterize themselves as descendents of the great chief, Līloa, and

“Kalo kanu o ka ‘āina” (natives of the land from generations back) requesting permission to enter. Students line up in order by grade level and gender with the faculty members who are facing the students, also standing ranked in order by age and gender.

The faculty member in charge determines if the students demonstrate they are sufficiently settled and have performed their chant skillfully enough to be accepted as worthy students. If so, the lead faculty member starts a welcome chant with other faculty members joining in accepting the students as deserving to be taught. Kanu has a set of twenty or so chants from which to choose. Many of these chants are for specific occasions such as before meals or at sunrise. Each morning, the students and faculty perform four to six chants before proceeding into announcements.

During the chanting, the students and faculty stand tall with arms at their sides, head up, eyes forward with sunglasses and hats removed. Once the chanting is over, everyone still stands in ranked position but with body relaxed. This is the opportunity for the faculty to have the students’ attention. Congratulations and celebrations are acknowledged for people’s birthdays, sports team victories, people doing community service and science fair winners. This is the time for announcements and for reinforcing academic or behavior expectations. During the second quarter, there were frequent announcements regarding science fair, urging students to turn in their proposal on time. A few weeks later, advice was given about working in a systematic manner so as not to leave things to the last minute. As students were finishing their science project boards, there was advice about not wasting paper as they print out their reports.

Protocols grant the faculty the students' attention because they cannot enter the classrooms until protocols are complete. No student is ever allowed to burst into a classroom as if he/she has a right to instruction as some students occasionally attempt in the regular DOE schools. Of course, experienced teachers never allow that, but at Kanu, protocols are so much a part of everyday life that students know they have to prove there are ready to be taught. Protocols reinforce the position of each student and each faculty member in ranked order. Protocols ensure that the faculty is in charge of the start of the school day having the opportunity to say whatever needs to be said. And again at the end of the day, class is not over and no one is excused until protocols are complete. Closing protocols are smaller and more informal because each class handles protocols on their own.

Since protocols are an important feature of each day, I wanted to photograph this ceremonial ritual. As my months at Kanu progressed, I came to realize, photographing protocols would be highly intrusive changing the experience from a communally shared ceremony to a performance.

The lead teacher of Pu'ukapu Project, Nicole Anakalea is not only a Kumu Hula but grew up living the Hawaiian culture. She resists having her class chant their protocols in front of Hālau Ho'olako because it feels as if the students are chanting their respect and requests to a building. Four days a week, Mondays through Thursdays, her class conducts their protocols in the pasture behind Hālau Ho'olako in the lee of Mauna Kea chanting to that majestic mountain. Performing protocols with Pu'ukapu is thrilling

with a sense of respect and honor coming very naturally in that setting. One day when I was attending meetings in Hālau Ho'olako, I saw Nicole's class in the pasture doing their protocols. I took their photograph using a telephoto lens from a distance behind them, so as not to intrude upon their concentration.



The high school class of Pu'ukapu Project stands with the three kumu (teachers) in the center, the girls lined up on the left and the boys on the right. Four mornings per week they perform their protocols in the lee of majestic Mauna Kea as clouds sweep across the summit.

## School Motto

The school motto of “kūlia i ka nu‘u” (strive to reach their highest level) is meant for everyone in the learning ohana, from students to teachers, staff and even parents. It is not just students who have learning demands placed upon them. Students, teachers and parents all set goals for themselves on their application forms and then re-applications each succeeding year, listing ways they intend to grow and develop deeper levels of knowledge of Hawaiian language and cultural ways.

Striving and improving knowledge and skills is a universally accepted way of life for everyone at Kanu. There is no cruising allowed even for those whose work is pretty good without much effort. At Kanu, effort is expected because whatever level the individual is at, he/she is expected to strive to reach his/her maximum potential in every project. No adolescent should ask: “Why me?” thinking that adults are oppressing them, because everyone is expected to give their best effort. With kūlia i ka nu‘u as the school motto, it sets the standard for high expectations in all endeavors. Teachers and staff refer to that motto many times per week, sometimes several times per day. This statement of Kanu’s expectations so embodies what they do and live at Kanu.

Even though Hawaiian charter schools are created to be “safe harbors” for students who do not fare well in the mainstream schools, they need to kūlia i ka nu‘u (strive to reach their highest potential) at Kanu. Even though learning is more “fun” at Kanu because it is hands-on and outdoors, students are expected to kūlia i ka nu‘u

(strive to reach their highest potential) at Kanu. Every student at Kanu is required to re-apply for admission each year. During the re-application process, just how hard the student strived to reach his or her highest potential is weighed. Not every student is accepted back for the following year, letting everyone know the expectations in the school motto are to be taken seriously.

### **Enabling Students to “Walk in Two Worlds”**

In the preceding section, I described the features of Kanu’s curriculum that are the most culturally-laden. Taken as a whole, these cultural values embody the wisdom passed down from the kūpuna (elders and ancestors) often presented in the form of ‘ōlelo no‘eau (proverbs and wise sayings.) They provide the cultural grounding with the school motto of kūlia i ka nu‘u (strive to reach their highest potential) to propel them forward. As stated in the Accreditation report “KANU believes that given such a Hawaiian-focused foundation, students can fearlessly enter any world of their choice, secure in their identity, their abilities, and their responsibilities as 21st century citizens” (Kanu o ka ‘Āina, 16.) Students who have attended Kanu enough years are shaped and molded by this culturally-laden curriculum to be confident about their identity ready to take their place in their home community or venture forth into other cultures.

Preparing their students to feel “quite comfortable walking in two worlds” (End of Year Report 2003, 3) is such a pervasive theme for Dr. Kahakalau and Kanu o ka ‘Āina it pops up in a variety of places in various forms and images. Sometimes this concept is explained in educational terms such as students are to be “bi-lingual, bi-cultural” (End of Year Report 2002, 1.) And sometimes, their goal is described in vivid images, such as: students are to be “equally at ease in a malo (Hawaiian loincloth) as a tuxedo” (End of Year Report 2008, 9.) Dr. Kahakalau’s and Kanu’s goal is to produce students who have “both Hawaiian and Western characteristics” and the “discernment to choose when to express them” (End of Year Report 2005, 20.) Developing skill sets of both the Hawaiian cultural world and the Western academic world is a highly ambitious goal for any youth.

## **Conclusions about Curriculum**

When Kū Kahakalau taught Hawaiian language in high schools or presented summer camps based on Hawaiian cultural experiences, her classes were the highlight of students’ lives. But if the student spent the rest of their days in mainstream style schooling, her classes were not sufficient to change the reality of the youth’s life. To do that, she had to create an entire, cohesive system embodying Hawaiian culture. If she developed a system for high school students, it would be too late by the time they reached that stage via the conventional schools. By that age, many Hawaiian students

have acquired an internal image of themselves as ineffective learners. To reach Hawaiian youth raising them up with a vision of themselves as capable learners proud of their cultural heritage, she had to create a system of education from the youngest learners through secondary education and beyond into post-secondary level of education and the community. Along with other founding parents, Dr. Kahakalau founded Kanu o ka 'Āina New Century Public Charter School offering an all-inclusive education from “womb to tomb” (Kanu o ka 'Āina, 22.)

Deciding to found a school upon Hawaiian cultural wisdom sounds like a productive idea considering the lack of success Hawaiian students have experienced in the mainstream schools in Hawai'i. But what would that look like in a school? What would students actually do from hour to hour? Bringing theory into reality in daily school life became possible through use of the charter school format as an opportunity to employ innovative pedagogy.

Kanu o ka 'Āina structures the way it presents education aligned with Hawaiian values by their behavior expectations, family-orientation and protocols. Those aspects represent the wisdom of the kūpuna (elders/ancestors) providing the cultural grounding for their students. But if Kanu only employed those aspects, they would be stuck in the mentality of previous centuries. By balancing those elements with the project-based learning and the school motto exhorting all (students, teachers and parents) to strive to reach their highest potential, they propel the school into the future. Kanu's ultimate goal is to prepare students “to walk successfully in multiple worlds” (End of Year Report

2008, 9.) By combining culturally-driven curricular elements with a “high degree of academic rigor” Hawaiian youth will be prepared successfully contribute on a global level (Kahakalau 2003, 173.)

This combination of elements honoring the past but moving forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is the key to Kanu’s effective curriculum. The wisdom of using this blend of ancient and modern cultural elements is corroborated by Vilsoni Hereniko former Director of the Center for Pacific Islands Studies in his statement that “who we are is not a rock that is passed on from generation to generation, fixed and unchanging” (Hereniko, 407.) People, culture and the education designed to transmit that culture need to evolve to succeed in today’s world. Kanu o ka ‘Āina although grounded in ancient culture has an equal emphasis on moving ahead into the future

In the following chapter, I will draw conclusions about Kanu’s bold experiment of innovative pedagogy that combines ancient wisdom with an orientation towards succeeding in the modern world. There will be an examination of if it is indeed possible to navigate between the indigenous and the Western world. The metaphor of “walking in two worlds” will be analyzed to determine if it is useful or appropriate to use. Then the focus will shift from assisting students to become bi-cultural, to Kanu as an institution. Kanu also has to navigate between the Hawaiian cultural world of values and organizations to meeting the requirements of a public charter school in the State of Hawai’i. The balancing act that Kanu as an organization has to perform will be described. For indigenous peoples, it is not just individuals (students or adults) who

have to walk in two worlds it is also entities such as Hawaiian public charter schools that have to navigate between two worlds.

## Chapter 4. Is it Possible to “Walk in Two Worlds”?

The image of “walking in two worlds” appears in Kū Kahakalau’s dissertation, Kanu o ka ‘Āina’s End of Year Reports and Accreditation Report for Kanu o ka ‘Āina. This metaphor is presented using different words and images. Examples of different wordings include: “prepared to walk successfully in multiple worlds” (End of Year 2008, 9), “have both Hawaiian and Western characteristics” (End of Year 2005, 20) and “bi-lingual, bi-cultural” (End of Year 2002, 1.) Different images are particularly vivid, such as: “as skilled on a computer . . . as on a double-hulled sailing canoe” (End of Year 2008, 9) and “equally at ease in a malo (Hawaiian loincloth) as a tuxedo” (End of Year 2008, 9.)

These are compelling images with desirable goals that are particularly important in the multi-cultural life in Hawai‘i. It would be so satisfying to have full sets of language, social and cultural skills to go between different ethnic settings as easily as changing clothes. But is it even possible for individuals or for agencies such as Hawaiian charter schools to “walk in two worlds”? In this concluding chapter the image of “walking in two worlds” will be examined to see if it is a useful metaphor or even a realistic goal.

## **Why is it Important to “Walk in Two Worlds”?**

Looking beyond the pithy statements and the compelling images, why is it important to “walk in two worlds”? This metaphor is explained in depth in Kū Kahakalau’s dissertation in the “Purpose, Vision, Mission and Beliefs” section. To be included in that section indicates this image as one of the core values upon which Kanu o ka ‘Āina is founded. When developing her pedagogy, Kū Kahakalau was keenly aware of the academic struggles many Native Hawaiian students experience. She characterizes Hawaiian people as “the most undereducated major ethnic group in the State” (Kahakalau 2003, 176.) For Hawaiians to progress from their undereducated status to take their place as contributors to their community, the State and the world, they need schooling with a “high degree of academic rigor” (Kahakalau 2003, 173) along with considerable computer literacy. Hawaiian students need and deserve a quality education, one that supplies all the skills needed to function and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century but also one that encompasses Hawaiian values and traditions (Kahakalau 2003, 178.)

When the curriculum is based upon Hawaiian culture, language and values, Dr. Kahakalau asserts that “education suddenly has relevance and meaning for Hawaiian children” (Kahakalau 2003, 178.) By using Hawaiian values and teaching Hawaiian cultural skills, the youth do not experience the dissonance that derails effective learning for too many Hawaiian students in the mainstream public schools. Kanu o ka ‘Āina students become confident with a sense of grounding by learning their Hawaiian

cultural skills. At Kanu it is not necessary to give up being Hawaiian in order to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Kahakalau 2003, 178.) Kanu o ka 'Āina's goal is to educate students so that they have full sets of skills in both the Hawaiian and the Western academic worlds. Kanu students will have such fully developed repertoires of skills that when encountering a new situation they will "have the discernment to choose when to express them" (End of Year Report 2005, 20.)

That all sounds wonderful, but why do Hawaiian students have to cope with developing two sets of skills when no one expected that of me? There is a proverbial pink elephant in the living room that we are careful not to talk about. It is time to acknowledge that Hawaiian students (and all students in non-dominant ethnicities) have to deal with something that was never expected of me.

### **Why do Native Hawaiian Students have to "Walk in Two Worlds"?**

When I was going through elementary and secondary education in Evanston, Illinois, my family matched the teachers, school, neighborhood demographics, church, YMCA, businesses and entire legal framework of the community. There was never any incongruence between my family's thought pattern and the school's and community's, which allowed me to concentrate unimpeded on academic (athletic, musical and youth leadership) achievement. The benefits of "white privilege" which is a corollary of racism

gave me advantages in education (McIntosh, 1.) If I had struggled academically, no one would have questioned my cultural competence because my culture matched the power structure.

While my culture set me up to go “full speed ahead” educationally, students of Native Hawaiian ancestry do not have that luxury. Native Hawaiian students in the public schools make up the largest ethnic category within the Department of Education, face a minefield of structural, cultural and even psychological issues as described in Chapter 1. First, the public school system “is based on western models and theories of education. As such, it does not accommodate diverse concepts, such as Native Hawaiian models and theories of education” (Kaholokula, 53.) Secondly, there are contradictions between the way instruction is presented in mainstream public schools and the way Native Hawaiian students are taught to behave and learn. This incongruence is what Dr. David Sing labeled “The Mismatch Theory”. In addition to those problems I argue Native Hawaiians have experienced ambivalence over education since the introduction of literacy by the missionaries. Tied in with teaching reading and writing was the missionaries’ view of Hawaiian as “degraded beings” (Judd, 45), who were inferior and ignorant.

Missionaries “wove into their teaching an emphasis on the evil of the Hawaiian value system” (Dotts & Sikkema, 16.) They instilled shame for Hawaiian beliefs and cultural practices while teaching literacy and introducing Christian practices (Dotts & Sikkema, 16.) I submit that Western education carries the vestiges of shame and

inferiority even today. Considering the psychological damage inflicted upon the native Hawaiians in the process of Western education, the consistently dismal academic results Native Hawaiian students in the public schools experience are hardly surprising. Education for Native Hawaiian students is not the straight path of only having to focus on academics as I enjoyed. While I had my educational path smoothed by “White Privilege”, Native Hawaiian students in the public schools have the structural and psychological barriers of racism with which to contend. The landmines in their path impede not only their academic success but also negatively impact their view of themselves as intelligent, effective learners.

A process of healing their sense of self and pride in their heritage is needed before students of Native Hawaiian ancestry can succeed or even consider themselves someone who could succeed. To be effective, Kanu’s curriculum has to be not only aligned with the cultural values but has to go beyond that into re-establishing pride in Hawaiian abilities. The rebuilding of cultural pride involves the systematic teaching of Hawaiian skills such as ‘oli (chant), hula, ceremonial protocols and Hawaiian language. Kanu o ka ‘Āina’s curriculum demonstrates how they value Hawaiian cultural practices by its allotment of time and placement of respect in the daily and quarterly schedule. In balancing its allotment of time between Hawaiian cultural skills and Western academic skills Kanu acknowledges that for Hawaiian students, knowledge of and pride in Hawaiian heritage are necessary for their concept of themselves as intelligent, capable students.

## **Is this Metaphor Useful?**

Being grounded in traditional knowledge and skills while also having the academic and technological skills to lead the Hawaiian people, the State of Hawai'i and the world to better ways of living, is one of the foundational values of Kanu o ka 'Āina summed up in the "walking in two worlds" image. The section on "Purpose, Vision, Mission and Beliefs" is available in Kū Kahakalau's dissertation for scholars to study (Kahakalau 2003, 175.) Since only a limited number of people have access or take the time to read about Kanu o ka 'Āina's philosophical basis, a pithy statement that people can visualize is needed in order to make the educational goal behind Kanu o ka 'Āina's curriculum understandable. To rally all the stakeholders from kindergarteners, to teachers to community members, an image that everyone can visualize is necessary. The metaphor of being able to "walk in two worlds" is a way for everyone associated with Kanu to get a handle on the need for full sets of skills in both the Hawaiian culture and the Western world of academic achievement. However, there are scholars who take issue with the use of this metaphor.

## **Henze and Vanett's Critique of Walking in Two Worlds**

Rosemary Henze and Lauren Vanett are educational scholars with an anthropological perspective, who researched and write specifically about the Yup'ik peoples who live along the Bering Sea. Although their article "To Walk in Two Worlds: or More? Challenging a Common Metaphor of Native Education Author(s)" is specifically about the Yup'ik of the Arctic, what they say applies to indigenous peoples everywhere. They consider the metaphor of "walking in two worlds" a feel-good way of aiding people to visualize "the intangible notion of different cultural and linguistic repertoires students need to navigate" (Henze and Vanett, 118.) By over simplifying the complexity of this task, Henze and Vanett assert it ignores the fact that neither the indigenous culture nor the Western culture has "internal uniformity" (Henze and Vanett, 119.)

Since "traditional" cultures are in the process of adapting and changing and even Western cultures differ from city to city, region to region, it is impossible to prepare for success for such infinitely wide possible outcomes. Even though the metaphor of "walking in two worlds" sounds so appealing, since the two different worlds are in reality so diverse and complex it is "unreachable" and "sets students up for failure" (Henze and Vanett, 123.)

Although these criticisms are quite valid, Henze and Vanett point out another problem with the "walking in two worlds" concept that is particularly pertinent to Kanu o ka 'Āina's curriculum. This challenge revolves around the amount of time it takes to

master the skills needed to be competent in any one subculture (Henze and Vanett, 126.) Youth is the time of life when all cultures train their members so that they will have the full set of skills necessary to practice their culture independently. Is it really possible to learn two entire sets of skills? Kanu's End of Year Report for 2007-2008 explains their goal: "As a quality 21st century model of education, Kanu's curriculum aims to prepare students to meet and exceed national and State of Hawai'i content and performance standards. In addition, Kanu students must also meet or exceed Hawaiian cultural standards, expressed in Hawaiian proverbs. Clearly our kūpuna (elders) set very high standards for all Hawaiians and those who desire to live a Hawaiian way" (End of Year Report 2008, 18.)

Although the goal of training students in two full sets of cultural skills is admirable, I ponder whether there is enough time during childhood and adolescence to accomplish that. As a child and adolescent, it was all I could do to achieve academically at a sufficient (though not as high as my Mother would have liked) level along with athletic, musical and youth leadership (through church and YMCA) explorations. In my Midwestern culture, I did not have as many family obligations as Hawaiian children probably do because academic achievement was our top priority. It was all I could do to learn the academic and what we referred to as extra-curricular skill sets of my Midwestern culture.

Scholars Rosemary Henze and Lauren Vanett also question whether it is possible to "walk in two worlds". Since their research focused on the Yup'ik, the indigenous

people who live on the shore of the Bering Sea, they give the example of the training necessary to become a marine mammal hunter a highly respected cultural practitioner in that culture. A youth needs to spend six days per week out on the ice in order to learn all that is needed to become a marine mammal hunter (Henze and Vanett, 127.) Obviously that type of training would interfere with any chance of Western style schooling. That challenge would also hold true for traditional Hawaiian education where it took fifteen to twenty years to acquire the body of knowledge necessary to become a canoe builder, kahuna (priest) or hula dancer (Dotts & Sikkema, 14.) If it takes an extended amount of time of intensive learning to achieve those highly respected cultural roles, how would it be possible to learn two entire sets of skills?

Although youth seems like a long period of time, especially for classroom teachers struggling on a daily basis to elicit more mature behaviors from their students, there is only a finite period of time during childhood. By the time a student is eighteen and graduating from high school, that is all the time we as teachers have to prepare a youth to take his or her place as a functioning member of the community. I have very serious concerns about whether any school has the time to impart two full sets of skills. It does not matter how noble the goal, there is only a finite period of time to educate youth. Any time spent learning one set of cultural skills is less time available to learn the other system. In addition to these challenges put forth by Henze and Vanett, there are other complexities to the “walk in two worlds” metaphor.

## **Metaphor of “Walking in Two Worlds” is not Black and White**

What at first seemed to be a black and white dichotomy turns out to have more complexities. In this section I will examine four complexities that trouble this metaphor. Each of these complications has been proposed by thoughtful friends and mentors during my writing period. I am fortunate that my thesis writing extended over a long enough period of time to give me a chance to return for follow up conversations with informants.

### **1. Ensuring academic achievement is not the only concern**

In a recent return visit to Kanu, the Senior Advisor, Betsy Boland, approached me saying: “Remember what we talked about a year ago when we were only concerned about the Western academic side of the equation? We really were missing out on something. We cannot assume that the Hawaiian cultural skills are automatically acquired at Kanu.”

When Betsy Boland and I did a recorded interview in December of 2009 discussing whether Kanu students could “walk in two worlds”, we only considered the right hand side of the equation. We had visualized a simplistic math equation:

$$\text{Hawaiian cultural skills} \cong \text{Academic skills}$$

The two of us spent a considerable time analyzing academic test scores. I noted observing behavioral responses students demonstrated when asked to do certain tasks. We judged those responses as indicative of their lack of comfort and efficacy level with

certain subject areas such as writing. While Betsy Boland and I busily compared statistics on reading, writing and math test results we only focused on one side of the equation, the academic achievement side. We were coming from the point of view that the Hawaiian cultural skills were so strong we did not have to be concerned with them.

## **2. Hawaiian cultural skills take time and intention to develop**

Anyone who has witnessed the Hula Drama Kanu o ka 'Āina puts on near the end of each school year, is astonished by the students' prowess with chanting and hula. Two hours of performances without any repetitions, demonstrates the extensiveness of the students' repertoire and depth of their knowledge. From the smallest preschoolers to their graduating seniors plus a few alumni, everyone performs with precision and pride in their culture. After seeing that stunning display of cultural competence, it is easy to assume there is no need to worry about the left hand side of the equation, the Hawaiian cultural skills.

Fourteen months later, when I turned to Kanu for a visit, Betsy Boland pulled me aside to say: "I've been thinking about what we discussed a long time ago and think we ignored something of importance." My thanks go out to Betsy Boland and all the inquiring minds at Kanu who considered my questions seriously enough to delve deeply into them. What we wrongfully assumed in December 2009 was that the students automatically excelled in Hawaiian cultural skills. We had assumed they acquire those skills almost automatically and we only had to be concerned about the academic

achievement side of the equation. We had not sufficiently acknowledged the amount of intentional teaching of chanting and hula. It requires teaching of the history of the ancestors and areas named in the chants along with the regular doses of practice to develop the level of skill demonstrated in their performances. The Hawaiian cultural skills the students at Kanu o ka 'Āina demonstrate are not automatic but rather require considerable instruction and time to develop.

### **3. Hawaiian charter schools re-seed Hawaiian cultural skills into community**

Sue Barton and other teachers have remarked to me with sadness that many of the students' families have completely lost touch with the Hawaiian cultural skills that were prevalent generations ago. Many students arrive at Kanu without any background in Hawaiian language, chant and hula. The revitalization of traditional skills is part of the role Hawaiian charter schools have assumed. "These charter schools make Hawaiian cultural knowledges – such as navigation, sailing, fishpond restoration, and taro cultivation – centerpieces for cultural revival, community networking, and academic excellence" (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2005, 31.) At a recent conference, Dr. Goodyear-Ka'ōpua expanded that train of thought by asking: "What happens when the home has lost the culture? The Hawaiian charter schools allow the students to re-seed these skills back into the families and the communities. Students have a chance to give back to the community, taking great pride in sharing those skills with others" (Goodyear-Ka'ōpua 2011.)

At Hawaiian charter schools, students reclaim their “Hawaiianness”. A parent of an elementary school boy explained on his re-application form: “Our son insists on going by his Hawaiian name, although most of his life he went by his English name.” Another parent of an elementary student wrote on his re-application form: “Our son is getting the opportunity that I wish I could have experienced as a young student.” Polynesian Scholar, Emil Wolfgram, confirms this phenomenon by explaining: “This generation of Hawaiians is determined to become more *Hawaiian* than the older generation. And that is the great spark or drive of the Hawaiian charter schools” (Wolfgram 2010.)

#### **4. Substantial academic skill is needed to become Hawaiian cultural authority**

There is one further complexity that contradicts the simple dichotomy between the Hawaiian cultural world and the Western academic world. Confirming this equation is not a black and white binary is the education level needed to be a Hawaiian cultural expert. Most Hawaiians who emerge as experts deepened their knowledge of Hawaiian culture, language, history and politics through academic study in college and graduate school. There are dozens of authorities of Hawaiian ancestry with advanced training in anthropology, education, geology, history, political science, law, medicine, politics, music, dance, poetry and visual arts. Virtually every profession has people of Native Hawaiian ancestry who combined extensive education with cultural growth deepening their Hawaiianness. It is illogical to say there is a dichotomy between Hawaiian culture on one side and Western style academic achievement on the other when many

Hawaiians have become more fully Hawaiian through university and graduate studies.

The two sides of my simple mathematical equation are not black and white dichotomies as originally assumed. Through further discussion, they have proven to have complexities and with both sides blended in some ways.

### **Is it Possible to “Walk in Two Worlds”?**

Returning to a question at the beginning of this chapter and beginning of this thesis, is it possible to “walk in two worlds”? At this point in my journey, I am aware this is not a simple dichotomy with Hawaiian cultural skills on one side of the equation and Western academic achievement on the other. But is it possible to live this very appealing metaphor? The anthropologists Gallimore and Howard who did the original study in Nānākuli in 1968 explain that biculturalism is not only possible, it is highly desirable. “There is no reason why the members of an ethnic group cannot maintain one set of behavior patterns with the members of their ethnic community and learn a second set that are appropriate in other circumstances” (Gallimore & Howard, 5.) People do it all the time switching from informal speech with close friends to formal speech in settings that require that. Many people switch between dialects and some even between whole languages. When I worked at Kalihi Waena School in a Filipino neighborhood, the office staff would switch back and forth between Ilocano and English without missing a beat. Anthropology textbooks refer to that as “code switching”

(Haviland, Prins, Walrath & McBride, 110.) But is it possible to switch not only language, but whole repertoires of dress and relationship mores? Is it possible to embody two different, sometimes contradictory, sets of cultural values?

There are people whom I have had the privilege of observing who move seamlessly between multiple cultures. Three people readily spring to mind, Dr. Kū Kahakalau, Dr. Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (co-founder of Hālau Kū Māna and Assistant Professor of Political Science) and Maunalei Love (Executive Director of Charter Schools Administrative Office.) Each of these women has sufficient knowledge of Hawaiian cultural skills and language to feel comfortable in Hawaiian groups and settings and shift gears easily to move into professional arenas. Of course, each of these women also has sufficient academic credentials to make presentations at conferences or before the State Legislature. Each of them must have invested years of determined study in order to acquire the ability to speak with authority. These highly respected women prove that someone can keep their Hawaiian cultural background vibrant and valued while operating at a professional level of Western expertise. But these are grown women, is it possible for youth of secondary school age to “walk in two worlds” as they do?

## **Can Kanu Students “walk” in the World of Western Academic Achievement?**

Visualizing the curriculum for Kanu o ka ‘Āina while writing her dissertation, Kū Kahakalau knew a “high degree of academic rigor” (Kahakalau 2003, 173) was needed so that Hawaiian students would be prepared to “thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Kahakalau 2003, 178.) That was her plan and I certainly agree that in order to have viable options in the Western world open, students have to command high levels of academic proficiency to enter post-secondary education. That is not to say that college is the only route to a successful, productive life. But post-secondary training of some kind is needed to develop skills that will earn an income sufficient on which to live in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Success in the Western world typically requires degrees and certifications. Therefore, the pertinent question is whether the plan of providing a “high degree of academic rigor” is being fulfilled so that students emerge from Kanu o ka ‘Āina with academic skills at a sufficiently high level so that they can choose a life satisfying to them?

In this section, I will briefly describe the results from several assessments. These will all be quantitative in nature with the assessments chosen as the ones used to determine Adequate Yearly Progress for the No Child Left Behind scores and also for college entrance. Kanu’s results will be compared with two other (sets of) schools: one that is a geographical neighbor and ones that are demographically similar. Two schools are needed to cover the age range Kanu services, but those schools have similar

demographic characteristics with a high percentage of students of Native Hawaiian ancestry and are located in a rural area. In order to protect the confidentiality of the schools as requested by Systems Accountability Office of the Department of Education, the specific names of the schools will not be revealed. For the sake of this brief comparison, only the reading scores, math scores and graduation rates for the year of the research study (spring 2010) will be examined.

**1. Comparison of No Child Left Behind test scores**

Overall, the students at Kanu achieved at higher rates than schools with similar demographics, although individual scores varied. While one school had only a third of their students reading on grade level and the other had one half, Kanu had sixty percent reading on grade level. In math, one school had slightly more than Kanu's one-third of its students meeting or exceeding expectations. With 100% of its seniors graduating, Kanu gives its young adults a chance at a more satisfying life than at the high school with similar demographics where nearly four out of every ten students did not graduate. In summary, although none of these schools met all the benchmarks for AYP, Kanu is holding its own better in No Child Left Behind. While Kanu has a School Improvement – Year 1 NCLB status, both of the comparison schools are in Restructuring. More importantly, Kanu's students are achieving better on an overall basis than students of comparable demographics in the regular public schools.

When looking at the schools that are Kanu's closest neighbors geographically, once again it takes two schools to span the range of grades Kanu services. Both the reading and math scores on the Hawaii State Assessment tests in spring of 2010 for the neighboring elementary school and neighboring intermediate and high school hover around Kanu's scores. In reading, Kanu's results of 60% meeting or exceeding proficiency is two percentage points higher than the elementary school's (at 58%) but six percentage points lower (at 66%) than the intermediate and high school's. In math, Kanu's 33% meeting or exceeding proficiency is five percentage points (at 38%) lower than the neighboring elementary schools, but five percentage points (at 28%) higher than the intermediate and high schools. The academic achievement results from the Hawaii State Assessment scores in reading and math between Kanu o ka 'Āina and the neighboring elementary and intermediate/high school are essentially the same.

While both Kanu and the neighboring schools need to improve their math scores, Kanu is relatively safe with No Child Left Behind, for now. But the neighboring elementary school is at the "Corrective Action – Year 1" stage and the neighboring intermediate/high school has been in "restructuring" for three years. The stages of the No Child Left Behind status will be explained in more depth in the following section. Therefore, the achievement of Kanu o ka 'Āina overall, is closer to meeting the requirements of the State and Federal guidelines.

The most critical indicator of whether a student has a chance at enough financial stability for a satisfying life is the graduation rate. In the last couple school years, Kanu

graduated 100% of its seniors. That is significantly higher than the overall rate for the State of Hawai'i, which is rounded up to 80% (from 79.9 %.) The rate of the neighboring middle and high school is 76% or approximately three out of every four of their high school students making it to graduation.<sup>4</sup>

## **2. COMPASS: College Entrance Test**

If graduating seniors are the end product of a school, studying their achievement should reveal the quality of education provided by that school. Kanu o ka 'Āina began its operation as a charter school in August 2000, so it was not possible for any of these seniors to have experienced their entire education from kindergarten through twelfth grade at Kanu. Eight out of the nine Kanu's seniors who graduated in June of 2010, had attended Kanu for years and one had transferred into Kanu fairly recently. Therefore, these students while they are not completely representative of Kanu education, most of them obtained much or most of their education at Kanu.

Betsy Boland who is the senior project director and by default, the college counselor shared the results of this year's seniors on the COMPASS Test in a tape recorded interview (dated 12/16/09.) The COMPASS Test is a placement test for college. Out of the nine seniors who were in line to graduate in June 2010, only "one placed into college level writing" meaning she could enter college taking English 101. "On a scale of a hundred we had several scores below twenty for writing. And their reading was

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<sup>4</sup> Rates for the State overall and the individual schools are taken from the ARCH web site on NCLB

significantly higher with nearly all scores about sixty. Math was low but not nearly as low as the writing.” When rating seniors who were mostly a product of Kanu’s education according to the COMPASS test, these students who were within six months of graduating from high school, had a decent level of reading but their math was weak and their writing skills were even lower.

Betsy Boland confirmed my impression of student writing. In June of 2009, I went to Kanu to see the Hula Drama. During that two day stay at Kanu I had a chance to review the senior projects from the 2009 graduating class. The portfolios were on display in the Lōkahi Room of Hālau Ho’olako in ranked order. I spent a morning reading from the top rated project down the line. Although I was impressed with the organization of the parts a senior project required including interviews, five page report and bibliography, I was not at all impressed with the level of writing. The writing did not have the complexity of sentence structure or vocabulary to be quality high school writing and certainly not that of a graduating senior. Besides, the topic of those projects was an examination of the career they wished to pursue in adult life. I worried, that if they could not produce mature writing on a subject of such vital importance, how would they be able to write a term paper on a more abstract, academic subject? In sharing that concern, Betsy confirmed my informal assessment by characterizing their writing as “worrisome”. However, they have taken steps to shift the senior project from an independent study to a more closely guided step-by-step year long process with

guidance on writing. Although that will ensure improvement in the quality of the senior projects, all secondary students need increased time and guidance on their writing.

All of the above statistics speak to the question of whether Kanu students have sufficient academic skills to be able walk successfully in two worlds. But there is a further question involved and that is whether Kanu o ka 'Āina as a school and organization is able to “walk in two worlds”. Having to cope with the No Child Left Behind requirements is an example of the type of balancing act Kanu and other Hawaiian charter schools have to perform while they navigate between two worlds. In the next section the implications of the demands of the educational system upon the Hawaiian charter schools will be examined.

### **Can Kanu o ka 'Āina Navigate between Two Worlds?**

To understand the dilemma the State and Federal requirements create for Kanu and all Hawaiian charter schools, we have to return to the basic reasons charter schools are created. The purpose for having charter schools is to encourage creative new strategies for curriculum, philosophy of pedagogy and style of instruction aimed at either a generalized or specific group of students.

Developing a DIP (Detailed Implementation Plan) and being granted a charter must be a creative, liberating experience. In effect it says to the community and educational power structure, “We have a new idea. We have developed a style of education and school climate that is going to work better for our students than what has been presented in the public schools up to this point.” But when a community group says it wants to open a new school, they have to be ready to handle all the regulations that come with handling a school, which is equivalent to running a complex business. Panel members of the Charter School Review Panel firmly emphasized at their April 2010 meeting that any group applying for a charter is guaranteeing they not only have the acumen to manage a new style of curriculum but also sufficient background with knowledgeable personnel to handle all the business, financial, health and safety, facility development, food-service and the raft of details and reports that are needed to administer a viable school. Creating a charter school is quite a balancing act.

Once granted a charter, a community is duly authorized to be innovative. Balancing increased autonomy plus the legal authority to try a new creative style of education is a counterweight known as “accountability”. Creativity and innovative thinking is balanced against a wide range of legal requirements. There are five basic accountability requirements including keeping clean and transparent financial accounting, as well as following health and safety laws. Additionally, accountability means charter schools have to follow union bargaining practices and labor laws. Because charter schools are public schools, they have to be non-discriminatory in

accepting and admitting students as well as being in compliance with federal IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) laws.

For the founding mothers and fathers of many charter schools, who often have visionary types of personality, these accountability requirements can weigh very heavily on them drawing their attention from loftier philosophical discussions to the nitty-gritty of balance sheets and rental agreements. These are not the type of concerns for which the schools were founded but they are necessary to ensure that everything is ship-shape and in order. Some duties and systems are automatically provided to the mainstream schools, but principals of charter schools have to figure out how to comply with the required reports without having the systems provided. After all, these are public schools receiving public funds therefore all legal requirements have to be met.

From sitting in the Charter School Review Panel meetings month after month, it appears all charter schools are struggling financially due to being underfunded. With the budget cuts in school year 2009-2010, all schools used their reserves and are operating without any margins with one having to shut down for the school year in mid-April. Ruth Tschumy, Chair of the Charter School Review Panel confirms that impression stating “when any charter school struggles, if it isn’t financial restrictions or problems inherited from a previous administration, it is usually due to difficulties fulfilling the compliance statutes and financial reporting requirements” (Tschumy, 1/16/11.) These are all part of the accountability requirements charter school founders and directors take on when granted a charter. Of all the accountabilities issues charter schools are

responsible for, the ones that I choose to emphasize are the ones related to academic assessments: both No Child Left Behind and which assessments are used to determine academic success for schools. These two factors have considerable impact upon a school's curriculum.

### **1. Implications of No Child Left Behind on Hawaiian Charter Schools**

Ensuring that students meet the same academic achievement standards as the students in regular public schools is one of the charter school accountability requirements. At the time Act 62 came into effect and most of the charter schools received their charters, all students in the state of Hawai'i took achievement tests each spring. If students from schools in lower socio-economic areas received low test scores, everyone shrugged and said "What did you expect?" Since this was before the No Child Left Behind Act went into effect, there were no real consequences for schools and students who did not reach the agreed upon standards. But after the NCLB Act went into effect schools were expected to meet the benchmarks set by the state. As years went by, consequences for schools who did not meet achievement benchmarks became increasingly more severe. As Karen Knudsen (Vice Chairwoman of Board of Education) explains "so many aspects of the law as it's currently written are punitive in nature" (Mariani-Belding, B4.) After a few years of testing for NCLB with varying results, a schedule was developed to show schools' status. By now there are many categories of

success (or lack of success) on the ladder called: “NCLB Sanction Status 2010” (ARCH NCLB)

- In Good Standing, Unconditional
- In Good Standing, Pending
- School Improvement Year 1
- School Improvement Year 2
- Corrective Action Year 1
- Corrective Action Year 2
- Planning for Restructuring
- Restructuring

All schools started In Good Standing, Unconditional. It is when a school does not meet Adequate Yearly Progress they drop a notch down the NCLB Sanction Status ladder. It takes a number of years for a school to slowly slide down the sanction status into “Restructuring.” As explained in a previous section “Comparison of No Child Left Behind test scores”, Kanu (as of the end of the 2009-2010 school year) had the NCLB Status of School Improvement – Year 1, leaving it safe from sanctions for awhile. But since it had not met Adequate Yearly Progress for the last three years in a row and the benchmarks were being raised, Kanu revised its curriculum at the beginning of school year 2009-2010.

Starting in August 2009, there were “Project Weeks” doing lessons such as those described in the narrative description of Project Based learning. During those weeks, the Projects teachers taught all content areas both as individual content areas and also integrated together. “Project Weeks” started and ended each quarter and when there were major all-school events such as Makahiki, Kani ke Ō (Christmas performance) and Hula Drama at the end of the school year. During these weeks, the middle and high school groups were combined together in the four Projects.

Alternating weeks were “Workshop Weeks” with one or the other groups, either middle or high school students receiving instruction in Hālau Ho’olako in individual content areas: language arts, math, health, P.E. and technology. A different set of teachers, specialists in their areas, deliver the instruction, while the Projects teachers remain at the Projects sites instructing the other group (either the middle or high school students.) In addition to the new schedule of alternating Projects and Workshop weeks, a new math program was implemented during the research period. Knowing that it needed to beef up its math instruction, Kanu purchased licenses for each student from third through twelfth grade beginning in school year 2009-2010. “ALEKS”, which stands for “**A**ssessment and **L**earning in **K**nowledge **S**paces”, is a web-based math system that individualizes the lessons presented to each youth (ALEKS 2010.)

This was a whole new style of education for secondary students at Kanu. Instead of the outdoor-focused, place-based education with content areas integrated holistically, Workshops feature a skill based curriculum of individual content areas delivered by

specialists. The Projects instruction with daily kinesthetic activities alternated on a weekly basis with instruction that mainly focused on paper and pencil or computer screen. As of the school year documented in this study, there was the original Plan A style of education alternating with a new Plan B style for a dual track curriculum.

Kanu's shift to dual track curriculum shows an acknowledgement that skills need to be built first, before they can be put to use in project-based learning. The math teacher emphasized that building skills in a logical, sequential manner is of critical importance in the content area of mathematics (Overcast 2009.) Pressure from inadequate math test scores on the Hawaii State Assessments resulting in not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress for the last three years, I propose led Kanu to make a significant shift in its curriculum organization. For Kanu o ka 'Āina to shift from its original style of (secondary education) education it employed from its opening in August 2000 to this new dual track style in August 2009, I argue shows a concession to the pressure No Child Left Behind exerts on its curriculum. As one faculty member told me repeatedly, "What you are seeing now – it's not what it used to be."

Kanu's shift in curriculum style to prevent any further downward slippage in NCLB Status represents a negotiation between "two worlds". Kū Kahakalau and the other Founders of Kanu o ka 'Āina designed its curriculum based upon cultural values and were granted a charter in May of 2000 to put this style of curriculum into action. For the first nine years of operation, Kanu featured a curriculum loaded with Hawaiian behavioral expectations, family orientation and learning that was primarily outdoors,

projects-based and kinesthetically oriented. Kanu's curriculum continues to be based upon Hawaiian behavioral expectations and family orientation, but that outdoors, kinesthetic, project-based style of learning now alternates with a more conventional skill based approach. This shift to a more mainstream skill based instructional delivery is, I assert, a major concession to the pressures of the "Western academic world" in the form of requirements by the State and Federal educational authorities.

Kanu o ka 'Āina as an entity has to thread its way between differing and sometimes conflicting sets of demands. With its curriculum based upon the wisdom of the kūpuna (elders and ancestors), Kanu has to continue its course in a pono (righteous) manner in order to receive continued support from the Hawaiian community. Not only does Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs supplement the State's funding but Kanu operates in partnership with various community groups. As start up charter schools, the State does not provide their facilities. Kanu has been afforded sites and facilities by the following groups: the University of Hawai'i Mānoa College of Tropical Agriculture lent them the Lālāmilo Main Campus; the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands lent them the Pu'upūlehu Learning Lab and Kamehameha Schools lent them the Waipi'o Valley Learning Lab<sup>5</sup>, until they bought their own site.

Kanu o ka 'Āina has to maintain its integrity staying in alignment with Hawaiian cultural values to continue enjoying the support of these community partners. It cannot relinquish its culturally based curriculum completely under the academic pressure of No Child Left Behind, otherwise it would lose the reason upon which it was founded and

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<sup>5</sup>Information taken from Kanu o ka 'Āina End of Year Report 2000-2001, 15

thereupon the support of its Hawaiian community partners. Kanu o ka 'Āina navigates its way between the world of Hawaiian cultural values and the world of accountability demands of the State and Federal educational authorities.

A corollary to the No Child Left Behind requirements is the choice of assessments by which students and ultimately the school is rated, also shows the difficulty of navigating between these two worlds. In my last section, I will show how the selection of assessments used by the academic accountability demands contradicts Hawaiian cultural values and how Kanu o ka 'Āina moderates that impact.

## **2. Which assessments rate student knowledge**

In the previous section on assessments and comparisons between schools, I streamlined the discussion of No Child Left Behind results by focusing only on the main criteria of reading, math and graduation rates. An assessment in science was added three years ago to the math and reading assessments used to determine Adequate Yearly Progress for No Child Left Behind. In addition to Hawaii State Assessments there is TerraNova Assessment in reading and math along with the National Assessment of Education Progress (Hawaii Department of Education Trend Report.) The above list of assessments reveals a definite pattern.

These assessments are all standardized academic tests conducted on an individual basis using either paper/pencil or computer. There is a distinct Western mindset to the types of assessments chosen as representative of a student's level of

knowledge. Not only are these assessments given in an individual achievement manner representative of Western thinking but also focused on too narrow a spectrum of behavior causing us to lose “track of what matters in a child’s cognitive, emotional and social development” (Shon, 48.) Dr. Manulani Meyer confirms this concern by asserting that we are now viewing intelligence as “something found in national standardized tests” (Meyer, 5.) Dr. Jim Shon, the former Executive Director of the Charter School Administrative Office, points out that neither educators nor legislators in Hawai’i are satisfied with use of these assessments but feel trapped in this “ill-conceived accountability system” (Shon, 47.) In order to receive federal assistance, the Department of Education has to comply with the federal requirements of No Child Left Behind. Charter schools in Hawai’i have to comply with No Child Left Behind as part of the accountability requirements to demonstrate their academic viability and maintain their good standing as a charter.

This is not to say that all charter schools are performing well on Hawaii State Assessments and No Child Left Behind. Of the thirty-one charter schools, eight were in Restructuring during the research period. Of the fourteen Hawaiian focused charter schools, three were in Restructuring during that school year. For the time being Kanu is safe from the sanctions of restructuring.

The administration of Kanu is fully aware of the need to perform on the Hawaii State Assessments, but resists focusing exclusively on the literacy and math skills tested in standardized assessments. During a preliminary visit to Kanu in June of 2009, Kū

Kahakalau told me “We will be true to our mission and vision and not let this law determine what we know our students need. We have many assessments, some quantitative and some qualitative, some are performance based and some paper and pencil as this one is. We are not going to change our curriculum for the sake of this one test.”

At Kanu o ka ‘Āina they open up the spectrum of skills viewed as worthy of acknowledgement and even rating. They honor the Hawaiian tradition of hō‘ike or “to show” or “exhibit” (Pukui and Elbert, 75.) Hō‘ike can also mean to demonstrate or an examination or a test (Pukui and Elbert, 96.) Dr. Kahakalau asserts that hō‘ike was “recognized as a primary form of Hawaiian assessment” (Kahakalau 2003, 91.)

Kanu emphasizes these assessments by scheduling student demonstrations at culminating points of their school year. There are critical assessments often in the form of student performances at the end of each school quarter, in addition to closing of grades for progress reports. At the end of the first quarter, the secondary students are required to submit their science fair proposal. At the end of the second quarter, all secondary students complete, present and are rated upon their science projects. The weekend before Christmas break and their science projects are due the students and teachers of each Project perform songs and dances at the Kani ke Ō performance. The third quarter ends with all secondary students being required to give presentations with their Projects, at the Ku‘i ka Lono Conference. The school year culminates with a massive effort known as the Hula Drama. All students from junior kindergarten through

twelfth graders and even alumni present poetry, hula and chant demonstrating what they learned during the school year.

Even after completing her doctorate in Indigenous Education in 2003, Dr. Kahakalau continues to research best practices in pedagogy for native Hawaiian children with Kanu o ka 'Āina as the laboratory. She refers to Kanu as a “research-based school” (Kanu o ka 'Āina Accreditation Report, 10.) Therefore, several of the assessments tracked are based upon Hawaiian cultural values and neither typically used nor given as much weight in mainstream public schools. And then some are assessments found in nearly all schools. Therein lays the power of Kanu’s assessment program. They test not just certain skill sets but a wide ranging set of assessments that rate the strengths and weaknesses of their students’ over the range of their multiple intelligences. Literacy and numerical skills are of course, tested as are the required standardized achievement tests, but so are fine arts performances and oral presentations. Kanu employs a fully loaded toolbox of assessments that spans multiple intelligences.

## **Conclusions**

In this final section, I will draw conclusions about “walking in two worlds” looking at whether it is possible for various sets, such as: myself, anyone, students at Kanu or

Kanu as an entity, to navigate. I will end with arguing whether or not the metaphor of “walking in two worlds” is useful or appropriate.

**1. Can I “walk in two worlds”?**

As for me, can I “walk in two worlds”? No, not at all. After forty years in Hawai‘i, I remain a mainland haole (Caucasian) through and through. But due to the number of years I have devoted to learning Hawaiian language, history and culture, many Hawaiians view that effort as a sign of respect honoring the Hawaiian way of life. Quite a few Hawaiians have reached out to me inviting me into their lives on occasion, allowing me a glimpse of their world. Because these are not the tourist versions of Hawai‘i, but the lives of people who practice Hawaiian culture, I cherish these glimpses.

**2. Can any adult “walk in two worlds”?**

If I am unable to “walk in two worlds”, is it possible for other adults to do so? Of that, I have not doubt, in theory or in practice. One of my anthropology textbooks states that many people code switch between dialects and languages (Haviland, Prins, Walrath & McBride, 110.) Gallimore and Howard go further in asserting that people can be not only bi-lingual but entirely bi-cultural. And that is a desirable attribute (Gallimore and Howard, 5.) Switching from theory into practice, I named three Hawaiian women (Kū Kahakalau, Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua and Maunalei Love) each of whom navigate easily between worlds. These are people I respect and have had the privilege to

observe while on this research journey. In addition to these three, there are undoubtedly many others who move between professional life and the Hawaiian cultural world with ease.

### **3. Can youth “walk in two worlds”?**

If grown adults who have obtained substantial levels of education can “walk in two worlds”, is it also possible for youth? Children and adolescents are by definition still in the process of becoming. Youth is the time each culture uses to instill all the skills and traits valued by the culture. At Kanu o ka ‘Āina there were many youth who appeared to have full potential to develop that ability. There was also a set of possibly a dozen high school students who seem to have already achieved that goal. These students were of course, the most proficient in academics and a range of other areas. They earned the respect and admiration of all and were exceptional role models for all students.

### **4. Can Kanu students as a group “walk in two worlds”?**

If a set of individual students has acquired enough skills in both the Western academic world and Hawaiian cultural world to appear to “walk in two worlds”, is it fair to say that Kanu students in general “walk in two worlds”? That would require a sweeping generalization far beyond my level of knowledge. I have read about Kanu and

observed there for more than three months, but that is a limited period of time and perspective. And so I will shy away from attempting that judgment call.

What I do know comes from comparing Kanu's achievement with my experience teaching in a Hawaiian community and then current test data. When I first started teaching in the early 1970's, students of Hawaiian ancestry were not achieving academically. Only a handful was on or close to grade level expectations. Most were a few to several grade levels below their chronological age in reading and most students were not engaged in their learning. All of us mainland teacher recruits knew there was a world of the Hawaiian family and then the world of the school with a yawning gap in between. This gap has been essentially bridged at Kanu with a high level of student engagement. Students stay in school at Kanu until graduation. For nearly every year of its operation, 100% of Kanu's seniors graduated, which is significantly higher than the 79.9% overall rate for the State of Hawai'i (HIDOE ARCH web site.)

Kanu's attendance rate as reported in its Accreditation Report (41,) is an amazingly high 98%. That means that students attend school everyday they are physically able to come to school (and probably some days when they really should have stayed home.) The neighboring middle and high school has an 87.5% attendance rate and the two schools in a rural area with comparable student demographics have 91% and 87.5% (HIDOE ARCH web site.) When compared with either the closest neighboring school or schools with similar students, Kanu's attendance rate is significantly higher demonstrating a higher level of student engagement.

The answer to whether Kanu students are ready to access both worlds is not clear cut. Their academic achievement as rated on standardized tests is for the most part better than comparable schools but most students are not quite ready to enter college level courses without remedial assistance. Their engagement rate, however, according to their graduation and attendance rates, is far higher than neighboring and comparable schools. It seems as if they are on the verge of being able to step into whichever world is their choice.

##### **5. Can Kanu as an entity “walk in two worlds”?**

Not only is the goal of “walking in two worlds” applicable to individuals and sets of people, can Kanu o ka ‘Āina as an entity navigate between two worlds? Claiming to be culturally based, Kanu has to stay true to the cultural wisdom of the ancestors and elders. There is also a set of very much alive persons and Hawaiian organizations Kanu has to convince they are operating in a pono manner. Financial subsidies and the use of land and sites owned by various community groups are at stake. Kanu has to operate within culturally shared values to continue enjoying the support of these individuals and groups in the community.

In the Western world the requirements of the State and federal authorities loom ominously over Kanu and other charter schools with friction between having a charter to be innovative and yet having to meet all accountability requirements. The academic demands of No Child Left Behind are mounting as benchmarks increase and Kanu slides

down the No Child Left Behind status chart. Having failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress a couple years in a row, it was at School Improvement – Year 1 during the research period. This rank is half way up, half way down the status ladder. Kanu is currently not in danger and doing better than the comparison schools, but it feels the pressure of No Child Left Behind figuratively breathing down its neck.

In order to strengthen academic skill development, Kanu changed its entire secondary education schedule in August of 2009. It instituted a dual track curriculum alternating weeks of project-based learning with more conventional content area skill development. This schedule shift along with instituting a computer generated, individualized math program named ALEKS, I propose represents an accommodation Kanu made to adjust to the demands of No Child Left Behind.

Kanu continues to employ a wide variety of assessment tools, many of which are culturally based along with some that are Western academic style. They resist the pressure to forego the time they spend developing, practicing and rating the Hawaiian cultural skills. At times, I witnessed the brave resistance: “We are not going to change our curriculum for the sake of this one (No Child Left Behind) test” as Kū Kahakalau told me in June 2009. But then the reality sets in along with a shift from secondary education exclusively in project-based format to the dual track alternating style of instruction. This demonstrates the pressure No Child Left Behind and the accountability demands exert upon charter schools. There is the theory but then there is all the

tension. In the process Kanu o ka 'Āina navigates between Hawaiian cultural values and demands of the educational authorities as best it can.

### **How is “walking in two worlds” a useful metaphor?**

The two anthropologically oriented educators Rosemary Henze and Lauren Vanett clarified that this metaphor represents a visualization of having two entire repertoires of linguistic and cultural skills available to a person (Henze and Vanett, 118.) There are several problems involved in this over-simplification such as lack of uniformity between “worlds” and the amount of time it takes to acquire any one set of skills. Although this metaphor is simplistic and fraught with problems, it is useful.

Kū Kahakalau and Kanu o ka 'Āina publications address many audiences. Scholars can easily understand the above explanation of “two entire repertoires of linguistic and cultural skills available to a person”. However, scholars are a small set within the range of stakeholders. Also in Kū Kahakalau’s audience are youngsters from pre-school through high school, their parents, community members in Kamuela and elsewhere spanning a range of age and academic sophistication. Use of this frequently used metaphor allows people to visualize complex issues in a readily accessible, image of physically walking between “two distinct physical locations (two worlds)” (Henze and Vanett, 118.) By simplifying the issues surrounding teaching biculturalism, the use of this metaphor allows for buy-in by the various stakeholders.

Despite problems over-simplifying complex issues, the metaphor of “walking in two worlds” is useful in making Kanu’s goal accessible to all involved. Despite all the challenges Kanu o ka ‘Āina faces and the occasional concessions it has to make to comply with the demands of State and Federal authorities, it still is doing as well or better than comparable options. While “walking in two worlds” is possible for some highly skilled individuals and even organizations, it is neither simple nor easy. “Walking in two worlds” requires the determination to learn and practice two entire sets of language and cultural skills and the adaptability to be able to negotiate the tension between two different sets of expectations. Some people even Kanu o ka ‘Āina as an entity, are able to navigate a course between divergent and sometimes contradictory “worlds”.

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