

## EDUCATION WITH ALOHA AND STUDENT ASSETS

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This study adopts a strengths-based perspective to explore how a culturally grounded approach to education, *Education with Aloha*, supports and nurtures positive development among Native Hawaiian charter school students. Despite the high level of risk factors among Nā Lei Na‘auao–Native Hawaiian Charter School Alliance students, the overall prevalence of assets among students compares favorably with that found in the national benchmark group. Differences in patterns of assets between Nā Lei Na‘auao and the national benchmark group are generally consistent with the tenets of Education with Aloha and are hypothesized to be either a result of this educational approach or based on cultural differences. The data are descriptive only, and further research using a more culturally specific instrument designed for longitudinal studies is needed to test this hypothesis. If a link between Education with Aloha and the strengthening of student assets can be established, this provides another reason to support Hawaiian culturally based education.

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It is widely known and accepted that many minority and low-income youth are placed at risk for educational, social, behavioral, and health problems. Native Hawaiian youth are no exception. Statistics such as those reported in *Ka Huaka'i* (Kana'iaupuni, Malone, & Ishibashi, 2005a) provide a compelling picture of the need to work aggressively to nurture Native Hawaiian youth if they are to be effective, contributing members of their families, communities, and society in general as adults.<sup>1</sup> While the factors that contribute to educational failure or underachievement among low-income minority youth are complex, schools must be counted as among the causal factors and among the remedies. We agree with Carol Lee (2005) when she stated,

the long-standing affair the educational research community has had with the idea that the experiences of being poor, a person of color...living in a community of people of color, predict failure in school achievement generally ignores the literature that documents the richness and complexity of experiences within such communities and families. The issue may not be that children from these communities are not ready for schools, but rather that schools are not ready for these children. (p. 109)

While it is important to understand the contexts from which our 'ōpio (youth) come to us, working from a “deficits approach” turns our attention to what we perceive as weaknesses. Delgado (2002) attributed the lack of effective programs that contribute to healthy development to our historical reliance on the deficits perspective. Bernard (2004) asserted that “changing the life trajectories of children and youth from risk to resilience starts with changing the beliefs of the adults in their families, schools, and communities” (p. 4). A strengths-based approach (Kana'iaupuni, 2005) disposes us to perceive our 'ōpio from a positive perspective, focusing on their assets and potentials. It embraces them for their current and potential contributions to society and sees them in a position to help, rather than to receive assistance. Strengths-based approaches empower youth and offer tremendous rewards for them, their families, and society (Delgado, 2002). For these reasons, *Ka Huaka'i* (Kana'iaupuni et al., 2005a) incorporates sections on proven and promising practices to build on the strengths of individuals and communities to increase the well-being of Native Hawaiians.

This positive perspective on youth is fundamental to the educational philosophies of the schools that participated in this study and is one of the keystones of *Education with Aloha* (described below). In this report, we present findings from the early stages of a project to assess the developmental assets of Native Hawaiian youth. In this report we are interested in three questions:

1. How does the overall prevalence of assets among Nā Lei Na‘auao students compare with that found in the national benchmark group?
2. Are there any differences in the patterns of assets found among the Nā Lei Na‘auao students and those found for the students in the national benchmark group?
3. If there are differences, is it reasonable to hypothesize that they are related to the sociocultural context of the students and schools, and, in particular, to the tenets of Education with Aloha?

## THE NĀ LEI NA‘AUAO CONTEXT: EDUCATION WITH ALOHA

In 1999, a handful of Hawaiian communities joined a small group of educational reformers to successfully lobby for a revision of the State of Hawai‘i statutes to create the opportunity to form “startup” charter schools. By 2000, a dozen Hawaiian communities had joined together to form Nā Lei Na‘auao–Native Hawaiian Charter School Alliance. Over the past eight years, the Nā Lei Na‘auao schools have grown to serve over 2,000 Hawaiian students in grades Kindergarten through 12 and have unleashed the potential of Hawaiian-focused education to initiate systemic change.

As Hawaiian-focused public charter schools, Nā Lei Na‘auao schools are committed to provide a quality education rooted in traditional Hawaiian culture, values, and pedagogy. This education is at once ancient and modern and aligns with traditional practices as well as the new three Rs in education: relations, relevance, and rigor (National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, 2004). All Nā Lei Na‘auao schools are unique as a result of their place, their resources, and their specific circumstances. Yet, over the past eight years these schools have collectively incubated a vibrant approach called *Education with Aloha*. This approach focuses

first and foremost on creating and maintaining positive relations among all stakeholders through the establishment of a dynamic learning ‘*ohana* (extended family). Like a traditional Hawaiian family, this learning ‘*ohana* practices aloha, aligning with the Hawaiian proverb: *Aloha kekahi i kekahi, pēlā ihola ka nohona ‘ohana* (Love one another, such is family life).

### *Ancient Is Modern*

At the center of Education with Aloha is the realization that ancient is modern, that Hawai‘i’s traditional values and ways of learning must shape modern models of Hawaiian education, and that ancient Hawaiian ways of knowing must define 21st-century Hawaiian pedagogy. Indeed, many traditional educational beliefs and practices set aside in the pursuit of 20th-century industrial-based models of education are validated by contemporary educational research on effective practices. The first column of Figure 1 provides examples of ancient Hawaiian proverbs and practices that help guide educational practice in the Nā Lei Na‘auao schools. In the second column, we show how they align with contemporary educational paradigms.<sup>2</sup>

**FIGURE 1** Ancient Hawaiian proverbs align with contemporary educational best practices

Ancient	Modern
<p><i>Aloha kekahi i kekahi—</i> Love one another</p>	<p>Pedagogy of the heart (Freire &amp; Freire, 1997)</p> <p>Affective education (Society for Safe &amp; Caring Schools &amp; Communities, n.d.)</p>
<p><i>Ma ka hana ka 'ike—</i> Through work comes knowledge</p>	<p>Experiential education (Association for Experiential Education, n.d.)</p>
<p><i>E 'imi i nā au nui a me nā au iki o ka 'ike—</i> Seek the large and the small currents of knowledge</p>	<p>Inquiry-based education (Inquiry Research Group, 2007)</p>
<p><i>He ali'i ka 'āina—</i> The land is chief</p>	<p>Place-based education (Sobel, 2004)</p>
<p><i>Kūlia i ka nu'u—</i> Strive to reach your highest level</p>	<p>Academic rigor (National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, 2004)</p> <p>Meeting and exceeding standards (Lefkowitz &amp; Miller, 2005)</p>
<p><i>Kōkua aku, kōkua mai pēlā ihola ka nohona 'ohana—</i> To give and receive help, such is family life</p>	<p>Relationships (National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, 2004)</p>
<p><i>E kanu ka huli 'oi hā'ule ka ua—</i> Plant the taro stalk while the rain is falling</p>	<p>Relevance (National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, 2004)</p>
<p><i>Hō'ike—</i> (to demonstrate)</p>	<p>Performance-based assessment to authentic audiences (Wiggins, 1998)</p>

A strengths-based approach to our 'ōpio and their education is implicit in Education with Aloha. One way of understanding and promoting the strengths of our youth is provided by the literature on developmental assets (Wasler, 2006). There is a significant body of research and experience that supports the proposition that cultural and individual assets can exert significant influence on students' engagement and success in school (e.g., Lee, 2005; Scales, Benson, & Leffert, 2000). We launched our efforts to more fully understand the strengths of our 'ōpio with a well-researched and established perspective on understanding and measuring assets—the assets framework—and the most comprehensive of the asset surveys developed by Search Institute. These tools are based on research with over 2 million youth since 1989 (Search Institute, 2005a).

### *The Assets Survey*

The assets survey (Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors) is published and supported by Search Institute. The survey is designed to identify the developmental assets of youth in a community or other group. Research across several ethnic and socioeconomic groups has consistently demonstrated that students with more assets are more likely to thrive (Leffert et al., 1998; Scales et al., 2000). Search Institute (2005a) describes the framework used in the survey as “concrete, common sense, positive experiences and qualities essential to raising successful young people...with the power to influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults” (p. 1). The survey is based on 40 developmental assets that are organized in two groups of 20 assets each (external and internal assets). External assets reflect positive life experiences. These assets

are about supporting and empowering young people, about setting boundaries and expectations, and about positive and constructive use of young people's time. External assets identify important roles that families, schools, congregations, neighborhoods, and youth organizations can play in promoting healthy development. (Search Institute, 2005a, p. 1)

## The 20 internal assets

are about positive values and identities, social competencies, and commitment to learning. The internal Developmental Assets will help these young people make thoughtful and positive choices and, in turn, be better prepared for situations in life that challenge their inner strength and confidence. (Search Institute, 2005a, p. 1)

A complete list of the 40 developmental assets and their descriptions are provided in Appendix A.

The assets survey is designed for use by youth in grades 6 through 12 and comprises 156 items. In addition to the assessment of assets, students are asked about their participation in high-risk behaviors (such as substance abuse and antisocial activities) and the presence of thriving indicators (such as valuing ethnic diversity, helping others, and school success). Only the findings related to the presence of assets are included in this report.

There are immediately apparent discrepancies between the ways in which indigenous and minority communities use some labels and the ways in which they are used by Search Institute. In a guide for using the Search Institute's assets framework in Alaskan Native communities, the definitions for 10 of the assets were modified from the standard definitions (Association of Alaska School Boards, 1998). Although there is room for disagreement regarding the labels assigned to individual assets, overall the assets survey has proved to be a reasonably robust predictor of thriving across ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic groups (Scales et al., 2000).

## THIS STUDY

The assets survey was completed by students in the Nā Lei Na'auao charters in May 2005. The survey administration was the first step in a longer term plan to develop a custom instrument more closely attuned to the cultural context of the charter schools, students, and communities. Kamehameha Schools and Search Institute have entered into a contract to develop a custom instrument in collaboration with the Nā Lei Na'auao schools that will eventually allow us to identify (a) the assets of the students in the Nā Lei Na'auao schools, (b) the contributions of the schools to student assets, and (c) opportunities for further strengthening student developmental assets. In addition to being better adapted for the cultural context, a custom survey will make it possible to identify individual respondents, allowing users to track changes in assets longitudinally and to relate assets to data collected in other contexts or with other tools.

This is the first use of the assets survey in a Hawaiian culture-based educational context. Participation in the survey was voluntary for schools, parents, and students. Financial and technical support for the survey was provided by Kamehameha Schools.

## METHOD

### *Participation*

Participation in the survey was voluntary for both schools and students within schools. The purpose of the study was shared with leaders of the Hawaiian culture-based charter schools at one of their monthly meetings. The nine Hawaiian culture-based charter schools that were working in partnership with Kamehameha Schools in the spring of 2005 and that enrolled students in grades 6 through 12 (the grade levels for which the survey is designed) were invited to participate. Six of these schools administered the survey.



All parents or guardians of students at the participating schools received letters from the school administrators informing them of the survey and requesting their support. Because the survey is anonymous, only passive consent is required for participation, although one school opted for active parental consent. On the day of the survey administration, students with parental consent were given the opportunity to opt in or out of the survey as part of the standard survey introduction.

A total of 198 students participated in the survey. Eleven surveys were dropped because of high numbers of missing or inconsistent responses, yielding a total of 187 usable surveys (see Table 1). The respondents with valid surveys represent 72% of the 258 students enrolled in grades 6 through 12 in the participating schools.

**TABLE 1** Number of assets surveys completed by grade and school

School	Missing	Grade							Total
		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Hakipu'u Learning Center			14	13	13	13	4		57
Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo		15							15
Kanu o ka 'Āina		3	6	8	8	7	5	3	40
Ke Kula Ni'ihau 'o Kekaha					1	4	4		9
Ke Kula 'o Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory School			10	11	6	1	3	1	32
Kua o Ka Lā	1	4	8	11	4	6			34
Total	1	22	38	43	32	31	16	4	187

### *Data Collection*

The assets surveys were administered in a standardized manner, following guidelines provided by Search Institute (2004). The surveys were administered to students by their teachers or other school staff during the school day. The survey administration is not timed; students were allowed as much time as was necessary to complete the survey.

### *Data Constraints*

Although limitations of a study are typically addressed in the conclusions, there are important limitations in the available data that constrain our analyses and, consequently, our findings. Chief among these is the fact that the assets survey administration is anonymous. Anonymity may increase the likelihood of candid responses to items regarding socially disapproved or illegal behaviors. However, the anonymous nature of the survey limits its utility in our current context. With an anonymous survey, it is impossible to link individual student responses or profiles to information gathered outside the survey context or to conduct longitudinal studies that require tracking changes in individual responses over time. Thus any longitudinal studies will begin with the first cohort to complete the custom survey to be developed collaboratively by Kamehameha Schools, the Nā Lei Na'auao schools, and Search Institute.

A second constraint is that the data returned to us by Search Institute do not include information on the presence of assets for individual survey takers. This means that, at this time, we cannot examine the relationships between particular assets and other outcomes within our population. Therefore, our analysis of the data is limited to reporting the rates at which individual assets are observed among the Nā Lei Na'auao students and contrasting this with the rates from the benchmark group.

In our Discussion and Conclusions section, we explain the next steps that will lead us to fuller access to data for our 'ōpio. This information will further our understanding of how our programs contribute to the development of assets.

## FINDINGS

Our findings are presented following Search Institute models that group student assets in two broad categories: external assets and internal assets. As noted earlier, external assets are the positive experiences young people receive from the world around them. Internal assets identify those characteristics and behaviors that reflect positive internal growth and development of young people (Search Institute, 2005a).

Search Institute suggests that each community using the survey hold community meetings to discuss the findings and identify community goals. As a preliminary step to that discussion, we compared results for Nā Lei Na‘auao students with those for the more than 148,000 students who participated in the nationwide survey in 2003 (the benchmark group).<sup>3</sup> The results below present highlights of the findings from this comparison. The assets highlighted are those that show the largest positive or negative differences between Nā Lei Na‘auao students and the benchmark group. Results for all 40 assets for both the benchmark group and Nā Lei Na‘auao survey participants are presented in Appendix B.

### *Participants*

Of the 187 students who completed the survey, 53% were male and 60% reported that they live in two-parent households. The majority of the students’ parents had a high school education or some college (including associate’s degrees). Fathers of 9% of the students and the mothers of 14% of the students had less than a high school education, whereas 18% of the students’ fathers and 25% of their mothers had earned at least a four-year college degree.

With general labels like “Asian or Pacific Islander,” the ethnicity categories included in the survey do not adequately reflect the ethnic identities of students in Hawai‘i. If the students who participated in the survey are representative of all students at their schools, about 78% of the respondents were Native Hawaiian.

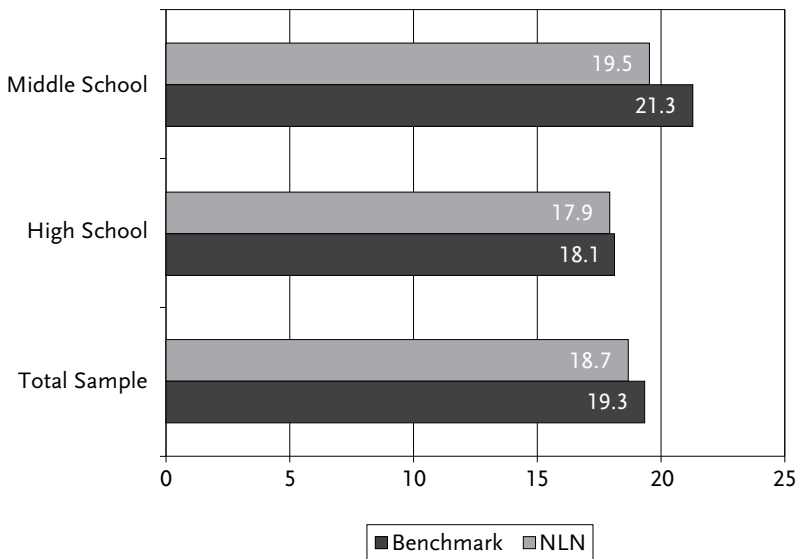
Of the total pool of students in the participating schools, 64% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 17% qualified for special educational services (including Section 504), and an additional 4% had been referred for special educational services and their status was pending final determination by the state. (These data are not collected as part of the survey.) More detailed information on the sociodemographic characteristics of the students in the participating schools is provided in Appendix C.

*Overall Prevalence of Assets*

Search Institute suggests that attainment of 31 assets is a worthy, yet challenging benchmark. It should be noted that only 9% of the youth in the benchmark group have 31 or more assets and that the typical adolescent in that group experiences 19.3 assets (Search Institute, 2005b).

As shown in Figure 2, the Nā Lei Na‘auao high school students report as many assets as the benchmark group, and the middle school students report about two fewer assets.<sup>4</sup> Further analysis revealed differences between the Nā Lei Na‘auao respondents and the benchmark group in the presence of individual assets. These findings are consistent with research published by Search Institute in which they found differences in the prevalence of individual assets across six ethnic groups and by socioeconomic status (Scales et al., 2000; Sesma & Roehlkepartain, 2003).

**FIGURE 2** Prevalence of assets among Nā Lei Na‘auao (NLN) and benchmark students

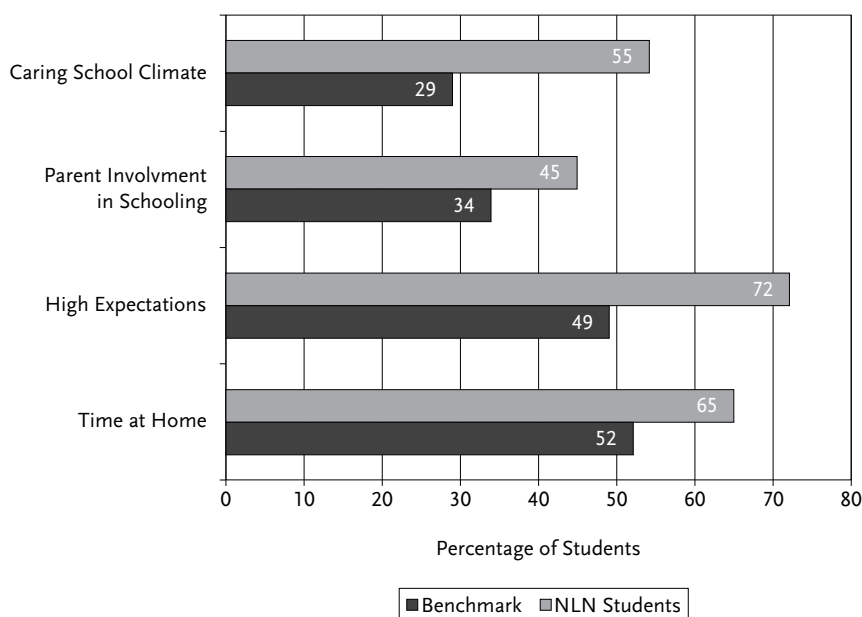


### External Assets

External assets reflect the context in which youth are developing. These contexts include their 'ohana and broader communities and the formal organizations with which they interact such as schools, clubs, and churches. The assets found in the external environment provide structure and support for positive, constructive decisions and behaviors. Among the external assets, Nā Lei Na'auao student reports of *Caring School Climate*, *Parent Involvement in Schooling*, *High Expectations*, and *Time at Home* were particularly strong relative to the national benchmark (see Figure 3).

Caring School Climate and Parent Involvement in Schooling are grouped with other assets related to support of youth. Caring School Climate captures the extent to which the school provides a caring, encouraging school climate. This asset is assessed with items that ask whether their teachers and peers care about students and whether the school environment is positive and encouraging. Parent Involvement in Schooling is assessed through items that ask students about their conversations with their parents about school and their parents' participation in school events.

**FIGURE 3** Areas of relative strength for external assets among Nā Lei Na'auao (NLN) and benchmark students

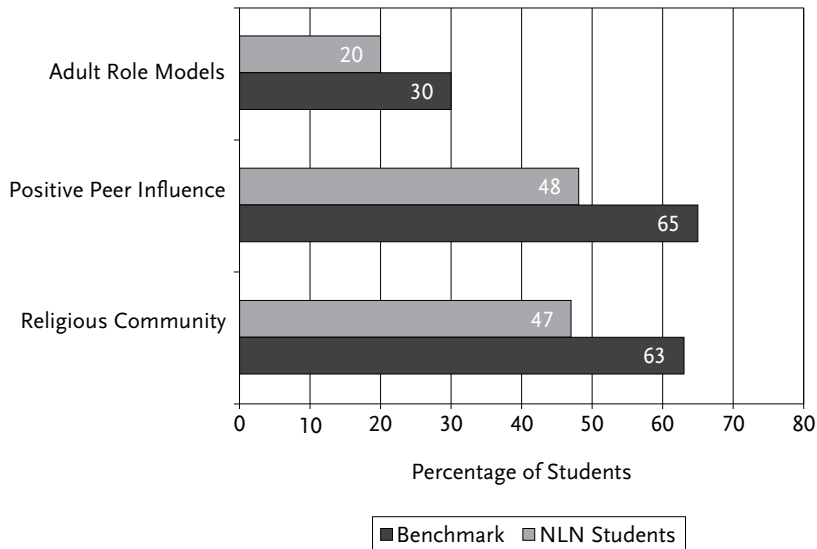


High Expectations is part of the group of assets related to clear boundaries and expectations. High Expectations reflects student beliefs that adults at home and at school push them to achieve their full potential.

Time at Home is a member of the group of assets related to constructive use of time. Time at Home is actually an inverse measure of the amount of time youth spend away from home without a clear purpose.

Although the Nā Lei Na'auao students spend less idle time away from home than students in the benchmark group, a relatively high proportion of Nā Lei Na'auao students may spend more time outside school in contexts that can increase the likelihood of participation in high-risk behaviors and distract them from more constructive activities and attitudes. Nā Lei Na'auao students are less likely to report that the adults and peers with whom they interact model positive, responsible behavior (*Adult Role Models* and *Positive Peer Influence* as shown in Figure 4). Nā Lei Na'auao youth are also less likely to be actively involved with religious communities.

**FIGURE 4** Areas for possible strengthening among external assets among Nā Lei Na'auao (NLN) and benchmark students



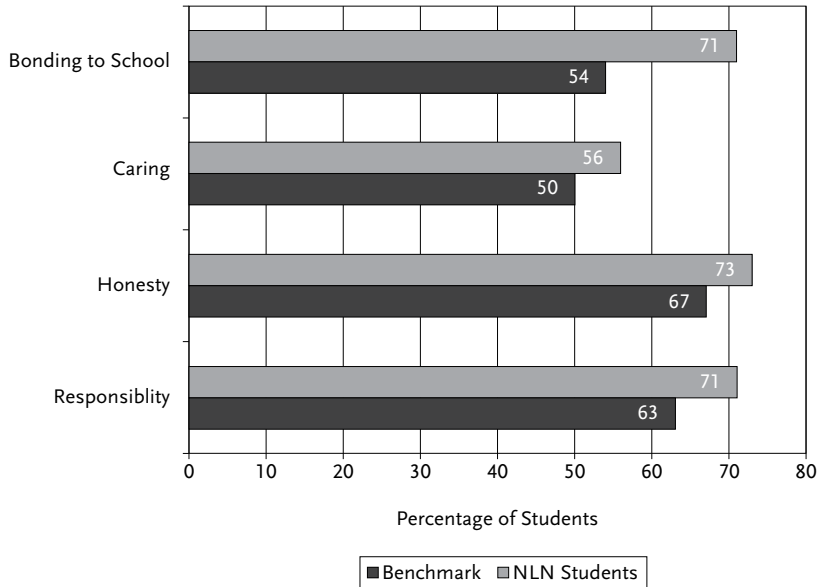
Adult Role Models and Positive Peer Influence are part of the group of assets related to clear boundaries and expectations. Adult Role Models combines items about the extent to which the students' parents and other adults in their lives are engaged in service to others and items about their exposure to adults involved in high-risk or antisocial behaviors. Positive Peer Influence is based on items about the number of close friends students have who "get into trouble" of various sorts or who "do well in school."

Religious communities can be an important source of support for youth. The asset *Religious Community* reflects the amount of time the students spend in activities associated with churches or other religious organizations.

### *Internal Assets*

Internal assets reflect the personal strengths on which students draw, both learned and inherent. These strengths are observed in personal characteristics and behavior. The internal assets are sources of strength and resiliency. Nā Lei Na'auao student reports of *Bonding to School* and internalization of values as demonstrated by *Caring*, *Honesty*, and *Responsibility* were particularly strong relative to the benchmark group. The prevalence of these assets among Nā Lei Na'auao students and the benchmark are shown in Figure 5.

**FIGURE 5** Areas of relative strength for internal assets among Nā Lei Na‘auao (NLN) and benchmark students



Bonding to School is a straightforward assessment of the strength of students’ attachment to their schools. This is one of the assets related to commitment to learning.

There are six assets in the group related to positive values. Three of these six were more prevalent among Nā Lei Na‘auao students than in the benchmark group, and none were less prevalent. Caring refers to the importance students place on helping others and making the world a better place. Honesty relates to the importance students place on being truthful. Responsibility reflects both accepting responsibility for their actions and taking their commitments seriously.

By contrast, assets that may be related to students’ ability to assert themselves to create positive, productive futures were less likely to be observed with this group. This includes two of the five assets related to commitment to learning, two of the five assets related to social competencies, and all four of the assets related to positive identity. The prevalence of these assets among the benchmark group and the Nā Lei Na‘auao students is presented in Figure 6.



**FIGURE 6** Areas for possible strengthening among internal assets among Nā Lei Na'auao (NLN) and benchmark students



*Achievement Motivation* and *School Engagement* are part of the larger construct of commitment to learning. These assets are based on student reports that they are concerned about doing their best at school and that they come to school prepared.

*Interpersonal Competence* and *Peaceful Conflict Resolution* are among the assets labeled social competencies. *Interpersonal Competence* asks students how they think others would rate their empathy and relationship skills. *Peaceful Conflict Resolution* is based on students' responses to items about how they would respond to overt physical aggression from a peer.

The final set of internal assets that appear to be less well represented among the Nā Lei Na'auao students are those related to positive identity. *Personal Power* is related to self-efficacy. *Self-Esteem* is related to students' positive perceptions of themselves. *Sense of Purpose* and *Positive View of Personal Future* are related to students' beliefs that their lives are purposeful and that they will have a "good life" as adults.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary mainstream American schools have been characterized as among "the least youth-empowering settings in this society" (Delgado, 2002, p. 37). School environments that foster positive youth development have the potential to be truly transformative, particularly for youth placed at risk for educational underachievement or failure. Bronfenbrenner and White (1993) identified 12 principles for practice for youth development programs: being there, affection, activity, reciprocity, challenge, stability and continuity, parent involvement, community involvement, peer engagement, altruistic action, preparation for adult roles, and linkages with other community institutions. These principles are consistent with the approaches that are foundational to Education with Aloha as introduced in Figure 1.

As noted at the beginning of this article, there is a well-established record of educational underachievement and disengagement from school and society among Native Hawaiian youth on the whole. Despite a high prevalence of risk factors

among the Nā Lei Na‘auao students (e.g., low incomes as evidenced by eligibility for the free/reduced-price lunch program), the Nā Lei Na‘auao group demonstrates nearly as many assets as the benchmark group. However, the prevalence rates for individual assets are different from those of the benchmark group and may be unique to this population and context.

The external assets in which Nā Lei Na‘auao students scored highest relative to the benchmark group are Caring School Climate, Parent Involvement in School, High Expectations, and Time at Home. All but the last of these assets are directly influenced by the school contexts.

These strengths may be particularly important given that a relatively high proportion of students may spend time outside school in contexts that can increase the likelihood of participation in high-risk behaviors and distract them from more constructive engagement. Low levels of Positive Peer Influence was associated with higher rates of risk behaviors in a study of over 99,000 youth in grades 6 through 12 (Leffert et al., 1998) and is part of the Boundaries and Expectations group of assets that is correlated with school problems and antisocial behavior for all six ethnic groups studied by Sesma and Roehlkepartain (2003).

The internal assets in which Nā Lei Na‘auao students scored highest relative to the benchmark group are also areas that are directly influenced by the schools: Bonding to School is consistent with the student-centeredness. The internalization of values as demonstrated by Caring, Honesty, and Responsibility is consistent with the schools’ emphasis on traditional Hawaiian values.

Many of the Nā Lei Na‘auao students came to the charter schools with a history of excessive absenteeism, and reducing absenteeism was one of the early successes of the Nā Lei Na‘auao schools in their first five years of operation (Kana‘iaupuni & Ishibashi, 2005). Thus, we suggest that the strength in Bonding to School is a precursor of future strengthening of Achievement Motivation and School Engagement as well as actual academic achievement and assets related to self-concept. A recent analysis of growth in standardized test scores at Hawaiian culture-based charter schools shows that although the level of achievement among students remains relatively low, their growth—especially among the lowest performing students—is significantly greater than that of their peers in mainstream educational settings (Ishibashi & Kana‘iaupuni, 2006).

Other internal assets are less prevalent among the Nā Lei Na'auao students. These include Interpersonal Competence, Peaceful Conflict Resolution, Personal Power, Self-Esteem, Sense of Purpose, and Positive View of Personal Future. We suggest that these results are, in part, a function of cultural differences in how students present themselves and are also reflective of the environmental factors that place many of these students at risk. It seems incongruent that these students, who report that caring relationships among their peers at school as an area of strength, would think that others would rate them low on their own interpersonal skills.

Among the factors that may contribute to these findings are the high value and esteem placed on relationships by many Hawaiians and the premium placed on humility (*ha'aha'a* in the Hawaiian language and value system). We believe that these cultural values are likely to depress scores on scales that ask respondents to evaluate themselves in favorable terms. This interpretation is consistent with our personal experiences and those of others<sup>5</sup> and by cross-cultural research on the constructs of self-enhancement and self-promotion (e.g., Brown, 2003, p. 604). The possible cultural bias in the measurement of these internal assets makes evident the need for a more culturally grounded assessment.

We will continue the work reported in this article by undertaking the development and validation of a strengths-based survey of student assets that reflects a more Hawaiian perspective on well-being. In addition to a more accurate portrayal of the assets of Native Hawaiian students, the custom survey will enable us to determine the contributions of the schools to the development of student assets through longitudinal studies.

In closing, we reiterate the perspective presented at the opening of this article: that the readiness of schools to begin where these children are at, to recognize the strengths they bring, and to validate and build on these strengths, is critical to the success of our children. The Nā Lei Na'auao schools, grounded in the Education with Aloha approach, are designed to do just this. We found a high prevalence of assets that may be directly influenced by the schools and that are consistent with Education with Aloha. Although we cannot establish causality with the data currently available, we believe the findings suggest that the Nā Lei Na'auao schools

contribute to the healthy development of our ‘ōpio. We also believe that the strengths-based approach implicit in the study of student assets will continue to provide insights into the positive effects of these schools and enhance our capacity to generate actionable knowledge to support their continuous improvement. If we can speak definitively about the contributions of Education with Aloha to the development of student assets, we add one more reason for increasing support for Hawaiian culturally based education within the public school system and potentially helping more children to be successful in school.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Katherine A. Tibbetts, PhD, conducts educational program evaluation and research at Kamehameha Schools (KS). Her current role at KS includes technical support to KS program staff for program monitoring and evaluation, technical assistance to Hawaiian culture-based charter schools, research related to the well-being of Native Hawaiian students in the public school system, as well as the work described in this article. Kū Kahakalau, PhD, a Native Hawaiian educator, researcher, and cultural practitioner, has spent the past two decades creating a culturally driven, academically rigorous model of education grounded in a Pedagogy of Aloha, which empowers students to reach their highest level. As founder and director of Kanu o ka ‘Āina New Century Public Charter School located in Waimea on Hawai‘i Island, she leads a dynamic learning ‘ohana serving hundreds of individuals of all ages who want to perpetuate Hawaiian language, culture, and traditions. She is also on the forefront of indigenous research worldwide developing culturally grounded assessment methods and measuring the impact of Hawaiian-focused education on native students. Zanette Johnson works with teacher candidates seeking licensure through the Hālau Wanana Center for Higher Learning, a program of the Kanu o ka ‘Āina Learning ‘Ohana. Currently a doctoral candidate in Teacher Education at Stanford University, she is committed to collaboratively expanding indigenous learning opportunities in Hawai‘i.

## NOTES

1 A recent update on the status of Native Hawaiians finds that

- Compared with other families in the state, Native Hawaiian households have the highest incidence of single-parent families with minor children (15.8% vs. 8.1% statewide).
- Native Hawaiian families with children have the lowest mean income (\$55,865 vs. the statewide average of \$66,413) and the highest poverty rates (18.3% vs. 11.3% statewide) among the major ethnic groups in the state.
- Native Hawaiian adolescents and adults remain vulnerable to serious health risk factors such as smoking and weight problems.
- Compared with their non-Hawaiian peers, Native Hawaiian adolescents suffer higher rates of depression (34.5% vs. 27.9% statewide) and are more likely to attempt suicide (22.6% vs. 20.0% statewide).
- The test scores of Native Hawaiian children lag behind statewide averages by approximately 10 percentile points in reading and math. The achievement gap widens as students progress to higher grades.
- Native Hawaiian students experience pronounced absenteeism and are the least likely of the major ethnic groups to graduate from high school within four years (69.3% vs. 76.7% statewide).

(Kana'iaupuni, Malone, & Ishibashi, 2005b, pp. 6, 8, 10, 12, 14)

2 Native Hawaiians are not the only group to have made this connection between traditional or culturally based practices and the findings of contemporary educational research. Examples of this are found in the work of Carol Lee (2005), the contributions to *Indigenous Educational Models for Contemporary Practice: In Our Mother's Voice* (Benham & Cooper, 2000), and are implicit in the writings of many others.



3 Although the benchmark group is not a national norm group deliberately selected to ensure the sample matches the U.S. population, results for the benchmark group were weighted by Search Institute to adjust for underrepresentation of minority and urban youth in their sample using 2000 Census data for community size and for race/ethnicity (Search Institute, 2005c).

4 Because we did not have access to information about the variability in the prevalence of assets, we are unable to determine the statistical significance or the effect sizes for differences in prevalence rates. Because the data are cross-sectional, not longitudinal, we cannot determine whether Nā Lei Na'auao students gain more assets over time until we have the custom survey and at least two years of data from that survey.

5 Jane Davidson (personal communication, June 6, 2003) told us that in Aotearoa/New Zealand, it is an accepted and not uncommon practice for Māori job applicants to bring with them a small group of family, friends, or mentors who can speak favorably on their behalf. This is done because it is culturally inappropriate to speak openly about their accomplishments. 'Iwalani Else (personal communication, May 24, 2006) has observed students ranging from middle school through medical school at the Native Hawaiian Center for Excellence. She repeatedly finds that Native Hawaiian participants with exceptional records of achievement and great promise often have a very difficult time presenting their strengths in admissions and job applications and interviews.

## APPENDIX A

### THE 40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS FOR ADOLESCENTS

**TABLE A1** Description of the 20 external developmental assets

Asset Type	Label	Definition
<b>Support</b>	Family Support	Family life provides high levels of love and support.
	Positive family communication	Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
	Other adult relationships	Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
	Caring neighborhood	Young person experiences caring neighbors.
	Caring school climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
	Parent involvement in schooling	Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
<b>Empowerment</b>	Community values youth	Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
	Youth as resources	Young people are given useful roles in the community.
	Service to others	Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
	Safety	Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.
<b>Boundaries and Expectations</b>	Family boundaries	Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
	School boundaries	School provides clear rules and consequences.
	Neighborhood boundaries	Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
	Adult role models	Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
	Positive peer influence	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
	High expectations	Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

<b>Constructive Use of Time</b>	Creative activities	Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
	Youth programs	Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.
	Religious community	Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.
	Time at home	Young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week.

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Source: <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/forty.html>, retrieved April 24, 2006.

**TABLE A2** Description of the 20 internal developmental assets

Asset Type	Label	Definition
<b>Commitment to Learning</b>	Achievement motivation	Young person is motivated to do well in school.
	School engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning.
	Homework	Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
	Bonding to school	Young person cares about her or his school.
	Reading for pleasure	Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
<b>Positive Values</b>	Caring	Young person places high value on helping other people.
	Equality and social justice	Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
	Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
	Honesty	Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”
	Responsibility	Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
	Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

<b>Social Competencies</b>	Planning and decision making	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
	Interpersonal competence	Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
	Cultural competence	Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
	Resistance skills	Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
	Peaceful conflict resolution	Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
<b>Positive Identity</b>	Personal power	Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.”
	Self-esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
	Sense of purpose	Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.”
	Positive view of personal future	Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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Source: <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/forty.html>, retrieved April 24, 2006.

## APPENDIX B

### DETAILED RESULTS

#### *Prevalence Rates for External Assets*

**TABLE B1** Support

Asset	Benchmark	Nā Lei Na'auao Charters	Difference
1. Family support	70%	71%	1%
2. Positive family communication	30%	31%	1%
3. Other adult relationships	45%	43%	-2%
4. Caring neighborhood	40%	40%	0%
5. Caring school climate	29%	55%	26%
6. Parent involvement in schooling	34%	45%	11%

**TABLE B2** Empowerment

Asset	Benchmark	Nā Lei Na'auao Charters	Difference
7. Community values youth	25%	17%	-8%
8. Youth as resources	28%	28%	0%
9. Service to others	51%	42%	-9%
10. Safety	51%	47%	-4%

**TABLE B3** Boundaries and Expectations

Asset	Benchmark	Nā Lei Na'auao Charters	Difference
11. Family boundaries	48%	41%	-7%
12. School boundaries	53%	58%	5%
13. Neighborhood boundaries	49%	49%	0%
14. Adult role models	30%	20%	-10%
15. Positive peer influence	65%	48%	-17%
16. High expectations	49%	72%	23%

**TABLE B4** Constructive Use of Time

Asset	Benchmark	Nā Lei Na'auao Charters	Difference
17. Creative activities	20%	22%	2%
18. Youth programs	58%	53%	-5%
19. Religious community	63%	47%	-16%
20. Time at home	52%	65%	13%

*Prevalence Rates for Internal Assets*

**TABLE B5** Commitment to Learning

Asset	Benchmark	Nā Lei Na'auao Charters	Difference
21. Achievement motivation	67%	55%	-12%
22. School engagement	61%	43%	-18%
23. Homework	53%	49%	-4%
24. Bonding to school	54%	71%	17%
25. Reading for pleasure	23%	24%	1%

**TABLE B6** Postitive Values

Asset	Benchmark	Nā Lei Na'auao Charters	Difference
26. Caring	50%	56%	6%
27. Equality and social justice	52%	51%	-1%
28. Integrity	68%	71%	3%
29. Honesty	67%	73%	6%
30. Responsibility	63%	71%	8%
31. Restraint	47%	43%	-4%

**TABLE B7** Social Competencies

Asset	Benchmark	Nā Lei Na'auao Charters	Difference
32. Planning and decision making	30%	24%	-6%
33. Interpersonal competence	47%	36%	-11%
34. Cultural competence	42%	38%	-4%
35. Resistance skills	42%	33%	-9%
36. Peaceful conflict resolution	45%	30%	-15%

**TABLE B8** Positive Identity

Asset	Benchmark	Nā Lei Na'auao Charters	Difference
37. Personal power	44%	24%	-20%
38. Self-esteem	52%	34%	-18%
39. Sense of purpose	59%	42%	-17%
40. Positive view of personal future	74%	64%	-10%

Source for benchmark data: <http://www.search-institute.org/research/assets/assetlevels.html>, retrieved April 24, 2006.

## APPENDIX C

### SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS AT PARTICIPATING NĀ LEI NA‘AUAO SCHOOLS

**TABLE C1** Distribution of all students in grades 6 to 12 in participating schools by grade

School	Current Grade							Total
	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Hakipu‘u Learning Center	0 0%	17 22%	18 23%	21 27%	15 19%	6 8%	0 0%	77
Ka ‘Umeke Kā‘eo	16 100%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	16
Kanu o ka ‘Āina	6 10%	13 22%	13 22%	8 14%	8 14%	6 10%	5 8%	59
Ke Kula Ni‘ihau ‘o Kekaha	2 9%	5 23%	3 14%	1 5%	5 23%	4 18%	2 9%	22
Ke Kula ‘o Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory School	1 3%	11 29%	11 29%	9 24%	1 3%	4 11%	1 3%	38
Kua o Ka Lā	5 11%	15 33%	12 26%	7 15%	7 15%	0 0%	0 0%	46
Total	30 12%	61 24%	57 22%	46 18%	36 14%	20 8%	8 3%	258 100%



**TABLE C2** Proportion of all students in grades 6 to 12 in participating schools who are Native Hawaiian

School	Hawaiian/Part-Hawaiian		Total
	No	Yes	
Hakipu'u Learning Center	24 31%	53 69%	77
Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo	1 6%	15 94%	16
Kanu o ka 'Āina	7 12%	52 8	59
Ke Kula Ni'ihau 'o Kekaha	1 5%	21 95%	22
Ke Kula 'o Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory School	0 0%	38 100%	38
Kua o Ka Lā	23 50%	23 50%	46
Total	56 22%	202 78%	258 100%

**TABLE C3** Proportion of all students in grades 6 to 12 in participating schools who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches

School	Lunch Status		Total
	Regular	Free/Reduced	
Hakipu'u Learning Center	37 48%	40 52%	77
Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo	1 6%	15 94%	16
Kanu o ka 'Āina	30 51%	29 49%	59
Ke Kula Ni'ihau 'o Kekaha	0 0%	22 100%	22
Ke Kula 'o Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory School	18 47%	20 53%	38
Kua o Ka Lā	6 13%	40 87%	46
Total	92 36%	166 64%	258

**TABLE C4** Proportion of all students in grades 6 to 12 in participating schools by special education status

School	Special Education Status					Total
	None	504 Pending	IDEA Pending	504	IDEA	
Hakipu'u Learning Center	56 73%	1 1%	5 6%	5 6%	10 13%	77
Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo	15 94%	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 6%	16
Kanu o ka 'Āina	43 73%	2 3%	1 2%	3 5%	10 17%	59
Ke Kula Ni'ihau 'o Kekaha	19 86%	0 0%	0 0%	1 5%	2 9%	22
Ke Kula 'o Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory School	34 89%	1 3%	0 0%	1 3%	2 5%	38
Kua o Ka Lā	36 78%	0 0%	0 0%	1 2%	9 20%	46
Total	203 79%	4 2%	6 2%	11 4%	34 13%	258

*Note.* 504 = Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; IDEA = Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.