



Reflections at Graduation

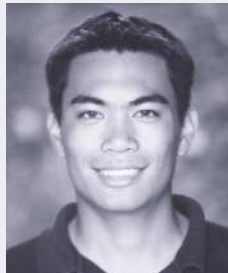
Two members of the Class of 2002,
Elias Samonte and Brittany Yap, take a
look back at lessons learned while attending
Kamehameha Schools

Appreciating Kamehameha

by Elias Samonte '02

*"I've been lucky
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— ELIAS SAMONTE



Standing outside the *ma kai* end of 'Akahi Dining Hall is like looking into a surreal glance of what lies ahead in my future.

This spectacular view covers virtually the entire south shore of O'ahu and reaches far out until the horizon fades. Symbolically,

it shows me that I've reached the top of this "mountain" of education, and the possibilities that await me outside of Kamehameha are as infinite and endless as I choose and allow them to be.

But school at Kamehameha wasn't always as beautiful and appealing as it is now.

Walking onto the intermediate campus six years ago was a terrifying and nerve-wracking experience for me. Here I was, a low-income, public-school kid with a single parent, entering what was and still is considered one of the prime private schools in Hawai'i.

Expectations from my parents were extremely elevated upon my attending Kamehameha, and after the first few weeks of school, I really felt like I had made the wrong choice in applying here.

It was at this point, however, where I began to learn the true meaning of education. Previously,

I had gone to school without a purpose, just knowing that I had to go because my parents said so.

Now, the "education" was overwhelming.

Simultaneous projects and essays throughout intermediate and into high school completely knocked me off my feet.

I think a lot of people can relate when I say that the transition between the intermediate campus and high school was probably my roughest time at Kamehameha. I had begun to grow a bit closer to my friends in intermediate, yet when we entered high school, a whole new batch of students emerged, and many old friendships dissipated.

My focus on schoolwork also became more important, as the grades we were getting really counted this time – that is, our performance in high school would affect our future plans for college and beyond. At the insistence of my parents, and Kamehameha, to focus more on schoolwork, I began to improve as the years went on.

Things just weren't right, though.

There was a lack of balance, and I knew what I was missing: my friends. The second half of my senior year was almost a complete turnaround for me. I felt that I had focused so much on school for the first three and one-half years in high school that I had failed to take advantage of the fun side of school.

I spent my final semester with more focus on just enjoying what I had been offered here at Kamehameha. I spent more time with my friends and got closer to them; I participated in more school events, such as socials and dances; and one day, as I was walking with my friends across Konia field, it hit me that our Kapālama Campus is simply amazing.

Now, with school just about over, I can truly say that Kamehameha has definitely taught me about faith. Not only in terms of God, but in believing that this system of education is beneficial and worthwhile.

I know now that everything else that occurs in my life is in my own hands. I've been lucky enough to have been led and guided by a most elite group of teachers, counselors and classmates.

My job from here on out is to show them my appreciation for everything they have offered me by succeeding in my goals and fulfilling my dreams.

To everyone who has helped me along the way, I owe you my life, and I thank you for believing in me when I didn't even believe in myself.

Growing Up at Kamehameha

by Brittany Yap '02



It's funny how adults can be so right sometimes.

High school does fly by, and the next thing you know you're arriving at Neal Blaisdell Center in your dress whites preparing for commencement.

I remember those days, not too long ago, when I could not wait to be finished with high school. No more detention, no more uniforms, no more daily homework and way more freedom.

Now, I sit here in my nearly empty dorm room reflecting.

Tomorrow will be the last regular school day of my high school career. With mixed emotions, I suck up my tears and write my trials, tribulations, and greatest memories of the last six years of my life here at Kapālama.

I live on Maui, and started boarding at Kamehameha when I was 12 years old. Intermediate school made me truly believe the phrase "What goes around, comes around," because for every time I spoke badly about someone in the dormitory, she talked badly about me.

For some strange reason, intermediate school is a time when kids are absolutely cruel to each other, and almost everyone tries to conform to fit in. Since I was the only child in my family, I had to learn to how to share everything with 24 other girls my age. I also had to learn to do my laundry, adjust to 'Akahi food, and ride the bus on weekends.

Even though I had some of my worst experiences in intermediate, I also made some of my closest friends whom I will cherish for life.

I had the privilege to play for the girls soccer varsity team since I was a sophomore. This program, and the people I have become so close to because of it, have had the biggest impact on the last three years of my life.

My most memorable experience took place my senior year, when I was one of the co-captains.

After a nearly flawless preseason, we lost our first two games to Punahou and 'Iolani and tied Pac-Five, leaving us nowhere close to first place at the end of the first round. Our coach was infuriated with us. The team was frustrated because our punishment was running until we basically could not run anymore.

It was discouraging to me because I found my team in a huge hole my senior year and I

almost lost faith. All I wanted, since I was 5, was to win a state championship. Finally the seniors decided to have a meeting after a game. We gave the speeches of our lives, and all I know is, it worked.

We went undefeated the second round and had fun getting our revenge. The ILH is allowed only one berth in the state tournament, and we ended up in second to Punahou by half a point.

Even though I was disgusted because my dream would never come true, I found contentment in all of the accomplishments and adversities my team and I overcame. The friendships we made will last a lifetime, and I'd like to thank all of my teammates for their love and support.

As you can tell, I have learned some of my greatest life lessons outside of the classroom here at Kamehameha. Hopefully, some students will take this knowledge as advice.

I've learned that you shouldn't try to change your friends, just accept them for who they are because they might just teach you something. Always say "thank you" to the janitors because they keep the bathrooms nice and sanitary. Go to every meal you can at 'Akahi, especially if you are a boarder, because you are paying for it.

Call your parents every day and tell them how much you love them – because anything can happen when you're away. Take ceramics and pottery as you can: it's free. Join a club – it keeps you focused and motivated. Play a sport: that is where I met some of my closest friends.

Upperclassmen, get to know your counselors because they'll be your biggest help. Go to ninth period study help if you want to understand something better or get ahead.

Kamehameha has been a wonderful place for me to learn and grow as a person. I am fortunate to have had so many opportunities and unforgettable experiences. *Mahalo* to all of my teachers and dorm advisors for believing in me and being so patient.

"As you can tell, I have learned some of my greatest life lessons outside of the classroom here at Kamehameha."

– BRITTANY YAP

