



# Teaching from a **Hawaiian** perspective

A collaboration between the University of Hawai‘i and Kamehameha Schools prepares teachers to tackle the unique academic needs of Hawaiian students

*“To prepare well-qualified teachers of Native Hawaiian children you have to start with people who know, love and understand the children and their culture.”*

– DR. KERRI-ANN HEWETT '76

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When Hālau Lōkahi charter school *kumu* **Keoki Na‘ili‘ili ‘98** teaches geography, he uses *mele* rather than maps as his primary teaching tool. While sharing with his students the meaning and motions of the *mele hula* “‘Uē ‘Uē Mai o Ka Lani (Weeping of the Heavens),” he incorporates lessons on Hawai‘i places, climates, plants and natural resources.

Na‘ili‘ili is a graduate of the University of Hawai‘i College of Education Kaho‘iwai Hawaiian Education Teacher Education Cohort. A cohort is a group of individuals having a statistical factor in common, such as age or class membership – in this case that factor is the teaching of Hawaiian students.

The two-year program uses culturally relevant curriculum and teaching strategies to prepare *kumu* to teach elementary school students from a Hawaiian perspective.

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Above: Kaho‘iwai graduate **Hinaleimoana Wong ‘90** incorporates lessons on Hawaiian culture, geography, math and more using *hula* as her primary teaching tool.

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Kamehameha Schools shared its resources with the UH College of Education to bring the Kaho'iwai program to life. The collaboration is part of KS' continued efforts to extend its educational reach to more Hawaiians. Kamehameha not only lent its Kapālama Campus classroom facilities to the cohort to accommodate student teachers, but shared the support, time and expertise of its faculty as well.

The cohort celebrated its first graduating class of 20 teachers in December of 2003, and those first graduates are currently working in Hawaiian language immersion schools, public charter schools and schools in Hawaiian communities. The program is currently undergoing an assessment, and data collected during this first session will be evaluated to help determine when the next cohort will take place.

## **Hawaiian students disadvantaged**

Studies have shown that Native Hawaiian students are among the most disadvantaged in Hawai'i's public school system. They have the lowest standardized test scores and graduation rates, and the highest rates of grade retention and absenteeism.

Among the primary factors contributing to their poor academic performance is the lack of qualified, tenured teachers, and the use of educational methods and curriculum that ignore Native Hawaiian language, culture and traditions.

*"Our mission as teachers of Hawaiian children is to take the standard curriculum and adapt it to become something that is familiar and pono for Hawaiian children."*

– KEOKI NA'ILI'ILI '98



Kapālama Campus faculty helped support the Kaho'iwai program. From left, Kamehameha Elementary School mentor teachers **Dawne Ka'apana '71**, **Ronnie Kaanapu Kopp '75**, **Mara Bacon '87** and **Beth Ann Rice Burgess '73**; cohort coordinator **Kerri-Ann Hewett '76**; and Kaho'iwai graduates **Michele Nash Tapia-Kosaki '97**, **Renade Hofrichter Kaneakua '76**, **Hinaleimoana Wong '90** and **Keoki Na'ili'ili '98**.

The Kaho'iwai program was designed to serve the unique academic needs of Native Hawaiian students. The name *Kaho'iwai* refers to the fresh water spring in Mānoa, whose waters are a source of life and sustenance. Dr. **Lilikalā Dorton Kame'elehiwa '70**, director of the UH Center for Hawaiian Studies, gave the program its name.

UH College of Education Assistant Professor Dr. **Kerri-Ann Hewett '76**, founder and coordinator of the Kaho'iwai cohort, says the program will have a profound effect on the future of Hawaiians.

"To prepare well-qualified teachers of Native Hawaiian children you have to start with people who know, love and understand the children and their culture," Hewett said. "If this doesn't happen, then Native Hawaiian children will not perform well in school because the experience is very foreign to them.

"Kaho'iwai prepares teachers to teach in culturally driven schools. Over time, this will result in generations of Native Hawaiian children who will embrace their cultural heritage. They will have the tools and capacity to succeed in the 21st century and will be able to walk successfully in the Western and Hawaiian worlds."

## **More teachers of Hawaiian ancestry needed**

The Kaho'iwai cohort could not have come at a better time.

A recent study suggests that while the largest percentage of students in Hawai'i's public schools are of Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian ancestry (24 percent), teachers of Hawaiian ancestry

are severely underrepresented, comprising only about 10 percent of the state's public school teaching staff. Hewett says that part of the reason for this is that many Hawaiians see themselves as classroom helpers, rather than teachers.

"When I went to recruit for this cohort, I found that many people of Hawaiian ancestry serve as teacher assistants but not teachers," Hewett said. "This is true among indigenous people throughout the world. In his book *Kū Kanaka (Stand Tall)*, the late Dr. **George Kanahale '48** called it the 'ghost of inferiority.' We don't perceive ourselves to be capable people. It has to do with a lack of self-esteem."

The Kaho'iwai program encourages Hawaiians to see themselves as teachers of many subjects, not just Hawaiian. "We can teach biology, business and even rocket science, and still embrace who we are as Hawaiians," Hewett said. "If you start from that mindset, then you open yourself up to a world of opportunities. That's the philosophy we are trying to reinforce."

Fifteen of the 20 teachers in the inaugural Kaho'iwai cohort were of Hawaiian ancestry.

## Living the lesson

The Kaho'iwai program covers the same academic subjects as the standard UH College of Education core curriculum, with one distinct difference - classes are taught by Native Hawaiian professors, whenever possible.

If an indigenous instructor is not available, Native Hawaiian community members are invited to help shape the course direction. University of Hawai'i professors who taught in the program include **David Hanaïke '76**, Dr. **Walter Kahumoku '79** and Dr. **Julie Kaomea '85** along with noted *kumu hula* **Vicky Holt Takamine '65**. In addition to Hawaiian professors, Kaho'iwai also welcomed Anthony "Joe" Fraser, an aboriginal professor from Australia, to share his perspective.

Kaho'iwai's teaching environment is not confined to the classroom. Instructors incorporate fieldwork into the curriculum to give students practical knowledge through hands-on experience. The Big Island served as a living classroom for the cohort during the last semester of instruction. A one-week excursion integrated elements of science, physical education, music and literacy.

Program graduate Na'ili'ili called the experience "absolutely amazing."

"We began our trip by leaving *ho'okupu* (honored gifts) in the ancestral land of Pele," he said. "So beautiful were the *hō'ailona* (signs) of that area, the light mist at the *pāhula* (hula mound)

in Kīlauea, the *manu* (birds) that showed their presence above Halema'uma'u, all joining in a chorus of *welina* (greeting of aloha).

"Our learning experience continued with a visit into the valley of Waipi'o to learn the art of *mahi'ai kalo* (taro farming)...to Kawaihae where the crew of the *Makali'i* taught us the art of sailing...and to Papawai, where the *'ōpae 'ula* (reddish shrimp) are grown and the *ko'a i'a* (fishing grounds) are struggling to survive.

"Our mission as teachers of Hawaiian children is to take the standard curriculum and adapt it to become something that is familiar and *pono* for Hawaiian children," Na'ili'ili said. "Kaho'iwai allowed us to live our lessons, so that we can teach from firsthand experience."

According to Hewett, Na'ili'ili and his Kaho'iwai classmates set a shining example for Hawai'i's indigenous people.

"When you have Hawaiian teachers who can serve as role models, and who can teach Hawaiian children effectively, it does much for the Hawaiian race," Hewett said. "It empowers us to see ourselves as self-determined people."



Kapālama fifth-grade teacher Dawne Ka'apana '71 shares her educational expertise with Kaho'iwai graduate Keoki Na'ili'ili.



Kaho'iwai graduate Renade Kaneakua '76 adapts the standard elementary curriculum to include information relevant to Native Hawaiian children.