

CULTURE-BASED EDUCATION

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Ho'omau i nā 'Ōpio

Findings from the 2008 Pilot-Test of the
Nā 'Ōpio: Youth Development and Assets Survey

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OVERVIEW

The 'Ōpio Project is a collaborative study that seeks to identify the contributing factors of positive development among Native Hawaiian youth. Results of the pilot-test suggest significant strengths of our 'ōpio (adolescent youth) across a variety of developmental measures. These strengths, or assets, highlight the promising directions we are headed toward better understanding and supporting Native Hawaiian youth development.

Background

Much of the research about Native Hawaiian youth has been based on a deficits model that highlights shortcomings of the Hawaiian population. Recognizing the importance of a culturally appropriate and strengths-based learning environment as a route to academic success, Kamehameha Schools, several of the charter schools with whom we partner, and Search Institute are developing a custom survey to better understand and support the development of Native Hawaiian youth. The final product of this project will be a survey that will allow us to: identify a variety of student assets; examine the contributions of the schools to student assets; and identify opportunities for further strengthening student assets.

In Phase 1, baseline data were collected from Kamehameha Schools campuses and participating charter schools using the assets survey (Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors) designed by the Search Institute to measure 40 assets identified as having a positive influence on youth development.

Phase II is comprised of the design and pilot-test of a customized survey. This pilot-test refines the assets survey to better reflect traditional Native Hawaiian values. The pilot survey also carries forward standard assets scales to examine the relationships between the broader constructs of youth developmental assets and Hawaiian cultural connectedness to better understand how each contributes to positive Native Hawaiian youth development.



'Ōpio from Na Lei Na'auao gather for closing protocol at the annual Kū'i ka Lono conference.

Informed by the baseline data, the pilot-test survey was uniquely shaped to include the assets that Search Institute's prior research suggests are most related to school success. In addition, the pilot-test redefines certain assets, such as those related to cultural identity and introduces assets significant to Hawaiian culture that were not included in the Phase I assets survey, such as spiritual development and environmental stewardship.

Many of the original measures were modified in order to achieve several goals relevant to our objectives of the Nā 'Ōpio: Youth Development and Assets Survey ('Ōpio Survey). The modifications were designed to achieve the following goals:

1. Retain as much of the original core items as possible
2. Improve the internal consistency of the measures
3. Create measures that in future testing would exhibit good stability or test-retest reliability
4. Make the measures more specifically reflective of Hawaiian cultural perspectives

ESPEEDOMETER

SP1 = Prenatal to 8-years
(Optimize and Build)

SP2 = Grades 4 to 16 and post-high
(Sustain Momentum)

SP3 = Kamehameha Schools Campuses, K to 12
(Innovate and Optimize)

The 'Ōpio Survey introduces items to assess the extent to which students are connected to Hawaiian cultural values and practices. The pilot-test contains several scales developed by Kamehameha Schools. The Hawaiian Cultural Connectedness scale (HCC) consists of six subscales. Although these subscales are highly interconnected conceptually, they are treated as distinct for the purposes of the pilot-test.

The pilot-test of the 'Ōpio Survey also includes a slightly modified version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale as an additional indicator of positive youth development.

Collectively, the modified Search Institute assets scales, the Hawaiian Cultural Connectedness scale, and the modified Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale comprise the 'Ōpio Survey. However, because of the distinct nature of each scale, each component is analyzed separately and findings across scales should not be compared.

The pilot-test was conducted in May 2008 in ten Hawaiian-focused schools, with the aggregate sample totaling 411 students in the 5th-12th grades. See *Table 1* for the participating schools and the number of students who participated from each school. The great majority of the students, 70%, were in the 6th-8th grades, with 52% being males and 48% females. Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) described themselves as Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian, but sizeable proportions also said they “strongly identified” with these ethnic groups: Chinese (29%), Portuguese (29%), White/Caucasian (28%), Japanese (23%), Filipino (23%), Samoan (12%), and Puerto Rican (10%).

Findings

As mentioned previously, Search Institute items and scales were modified in order to better reflect Hawaiian culture. Because of the changes made to the scale, we are no longer able to compare our data to the national benchmarks identified by Search Institute in their analysis of youth developmental assets. It is important to note, as well, that the pilot test findings reported do not serve as a baseline that future findings can be measured against. However, the field-test version should serve this purpose.

The results of this pilot test should be considered within the broader context of this project and as a preliminary step toward a final instrument. This pilot test validates our item selection, constructs, and scoring procedures. Analysis of the pilot test has yielded revisions to items, redefinitions of constructs, and modifications to scoring procedures.

The most useful comparison that can be made at this point in survey development is between aggregate responses and individual schools. Participating schools will receive school-level reports that allow for comparisons between the responses of their students and the broader context of responses among all participating schools.

Table 1: Participating schools and number of students from each school

School	Number of participants
Hakipu'u Learning Center	17
Hālau Kū Māna	75
Kanuikapono Learning Center	6
Kanu 'o ka 'Āina	41
Ka 'Umeke Kā'eo	14
Kawaihona 'o ka Na'auao	99
Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'o Ānuenuē	81
Ke Kula Ni'ihau o Kekaha Learning Center	15
Kua 'o ka Lā	39
Kula Aupuni Ni'ihau A Kāhelelani Aloha	27
TOTAL	411

For all assets, constructs were scored using a binary method. For many of the scales, students had to "agree" or "strongly agree" with most statements in a given construct to be considered as having an asset. A similar binary method of scoring was used for other scales included in this survey.

The variation in number of items included in each construct should also be considered when examining the percentage of students experiencing a given asset. This variation may have influenced the results for some. For instance, for constructs comprised of many items a student would have to consistently respond with "agree" or "strongly agree" to a greater number of items to be identified as experiencing the related asset. This is an issue that will be resolved as we prepare for the field test.

Search Institute Derived Scales

The percentage of students reporting that they experience the assets from the Search Institute derived scales is reported in *Table 2*. Of the Search Institute youth developmental assets, *prosocial values* was the asset experienced by the greatest percentage of students (84%) indicating high levels of social awareness among students surveyed. The *prosocial values* construct was measured by a group of questions that asked students about socially-oriented values—e.g., helping others, keeping their family's culture and traditions alive, protecting the environment—that influenced their daily lives. This finding

clearly identifies a strength of these students and their schools in recognizing individual responsibility in the broader context of 'ohana, community, and the environment.

A clear majority of students (85%) report being strongly motivated to achieve academically. *Achievement motivation* (82%) is measured by their agreement to items about the short- and long-term benefits of doing well in school. Students also report *high expectations* (68%) from parents and teachers. However, the percentage of students who report experiencing *school engagement* (29%) and *positive orientation to schoolwork* (23%) is much lower. This disparity may be attributed to the types of questions that were asked. *Achievement motivation* and *high expectations* were captured by questions that were conceptual in nature and more directly asked students about their beliefs. On the other hand, *school engagement* and *positive orientation to schoolwork* included questions that asked about specific characteristics or behaviors of students. Again, in the scoring, students would have had to "agree" or "strongly agree" with each of the questions in the construct to be considered as experiencing the asset. Thus, experiencing an asset may have been easier to achieve when agreeing with a concept rather than with a number of specific characteristics or behaviors.

Indicating another area of strength, over three-quarters (77%) of the students surveyed participated in *youth programs* or extracurricular activities like sports teams, school-sponsored clubs and groups, or organizations outside of school. Additionally, 53% of all students (or approximately 70% of these students who participate in youth programs) report that they learn skills like teamwork, leadership, conflict management, and decision-making and have opportunities to develop warm and trusting relationships with peers and adults (youth program quality assets).

A majority of students also report engaging in *environmental stewardship* (66%) on a regular basis. This percentage is consistent with the efforts of Hawaiian-focused schools to teach students the value of mālama 'āina. For this asset, students were asked about their active participation in individual acts (conserving water and electricity or recycling) and group activities (school or community clean-ups or recycling) that protect our land, air, and natural resources.

To capture *spiritual development*, a critical component of Native Hawaiian well-being, this survey includes a newly added scale that measures where our 'ōpio are in terms of their spiritual development. Statements in this construct revolved around students' faith in a higher power and the influence of spiritual beliefs in guiding the behavior of participating students. A total of 57% of students report *spiritual development* as an asset, suggesting that spirituality is a strong factor in their development.

Table 2. Percentage of students participating in the pilot-test who experience Search Institute derived developmental assets

Search Institute Derived Assets	Percent with Asset
Prosocial values	84
Achievement motivation	82
Youth programs	77
High expectations	68
Environmental stewardship	66
Service to others	62
Prosocial orientation	60
Parent involvement in schooling	58
Active learning	57
Spiritual development	57
Youth program quality	53
Caring school climate	45
Bonding to school	43
School engagement	29
Positive orientation to schoolwork	23

Hawaiian Cultural Connectedness Scale

The percentages of students reporting that they experience assets from the Hawaiian Cultural Connectedness scale are reported in Table 3. Hawaiian-focused schools play a critical role in fostering a positive attachment to Hawaiian culture. Of the subscales captured by the Hawaiian Cultural Connectedness scale, the largest percentage of students surveyed experience cultural attachment (68%). This construct consists of ten items regarding students' attachment to Hawaiian culture in terms of belonging, the desire to learn more, and values.

A majority of students (64%) report experiencing *Hawaiian language* as an asset. As part of the language construct, students were asked about their ability to understand and speak Hawaiian language and asked about their ability to participate in protocol in Hawaiian (entry chants, pule, personal introductions, etc.). Of the sample, one-third of students (33%) attended Hawaiian immersion schools where Hawaiian language is the mode of

instruction yet nearly double that amount experience *Hawaiian language* as an asset indicating strong use of the Hawaiian language in participating schools.

Another subscale of the Hawaiian cultural connectedness scale is *connection to 'āina*. A total of 54% of participating students report that the 'āina is part of their identity and that they experience deep connections to the well-being of the land. Continued land-based educational opportunities can further develop and cultivate connections our 'ōpio have to the land.

Slightly more than half of students (52%) feel a strong *connection to 'ohana*. This construct was measured by student responses about emotional and moral support they receive from family as well as their participation in shared activities with their families. Recognizing the broad definitions of 'ohana, also included in this construct are statements that measure connections within the community that students may experience through relations with neighbors.

In all, 43% of students report active participation in the Hawaiian practices included in this survey. The *cultural practices* construct was measured by students' responses to thirteen statements about their participation in a variety of Hawaiian practices including dancing hula, learning genealogy, using Native healing and medicinal practices, as well as other practices. As suggested previously, the greater amount of items in this construct, may have had a negative impact on the percentage of students identified as experiencing it.

The *cultural issues* construct highlights the engagement of 'ōpio on a number of issues relevant to the Native Hawaiian community. This construct included items that asked students about their awareness and support of the following issues: self-determination, gathering rights, protection of wahi pana (cultural sites) and Hawaiian language revitalization. A total of 27% of students included in this survey were not only aware of the issues, but had done something in support of them.

Modified Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Overall, 53% of students experience positive self-esteem based on their responses to the modified Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale used in the 'Ōpio Survey. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale is the most widely used self-esteem scale and was developed to measure the global self-esteem, or self-worth and self-acceptance, of adolescents. The scale is comprised of a balance of positively and negatively stated items about self-worth. Two of the negatively stated items were dropped in the modified version of the scale included in the 'Ōpio Survey pilot-test because prior research has shown those items to be less reliable with minority populations.

Table 3: Percentage of students participating in the pilot-test who experience assets from the Hawaiian Cultural Connectedness scale

Hawaiian Cultural Connectedness Scale	Percent with Asset
Cultural attachment	68
Hawaiian language	64
Connection to 'āina	54
Connection to 'ohana	52
Cultural practices	43
Cultural issues	27

Next steps

A forthcoming report about the 'Ōpio Survey pilot-test will present findings regarding the significant value of developing Hawaiian cultural connectedness within Native Hawaiian adolescents. According to pilot-test data, Native Hawaiian students who experience stronger connections to the Hawaiian culture were also more likely to experience developmental assets that are most related to school success. This relationship between Hawaiian cultural connectedness and other developmental assets has promising implications about the relevance of Hawaiian culture-based education and its role in contributing to academic and life success for our 'ōpio.

The next phase of this project which includes the 'Ōpio Survey field-test will consist of survey administration and data collection in January-February 2009. Please contact project manager Shawna Medeiros no later than December 31, 2008 by phone (534-3962) or via email (shmedeir@ksbe.edu) if you would like to participate in the field-test.

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