

# Kikī Nā Wai: Swiftly Flowing Streams

Examples of ‘Ohana and Community Integration in Culture-Based Education

Kamehameha Schools Research & Evaluation Division Culture in Education Brief Series

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June 2008



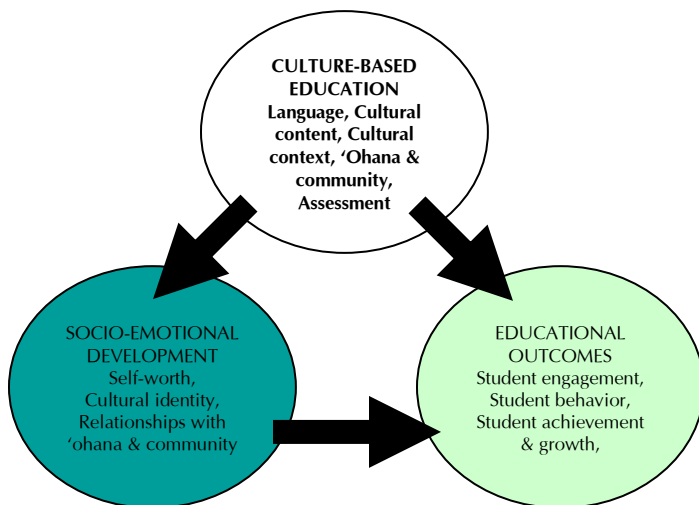
## OVERVIEW OF STUDY

In a survey, we asked 600 secondary teachers across Hawai‘i to share their educational strategies with us. This report contains examples of how teachers integrate family and community in their classes and offers an up close look at Hawaiian culture-based education. More information on the study design can be found on the back page

## WHAT IS CULTURE-BASED EDUCATION?

Culture-based education (CBE) is the grounding of instruction and student learning in the values, norms, knowledge, beliefs, practices, experiences, and language that are the foundation of a(n indigenous) culture. Research suggests that culturally responsive educational strategies help students to feel engaged and connected to what they are learning. When used routinely, CBE practices can positively impact both socio-emotional and educational outcomes for students (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education theoretical model



When positioned in Hawai‘i, CBE activities often take shape around seven broad and integrated themes (Figure 2). These cultural themes encompass sound, research-based “best practices,” such as differentiation by developing curricular content, instructional strategies, and assessment approaches through an indigenous Hawaiian lens.

The first two themes, pilina ‘ohana and pilina kaiāulu are the focus of this report and relate directly to well-known successful educational practices that draw upon family and community involvement in student learning.<sup>1</sup> After identifying the skills, knowledge, and resources in their students’ families and/or communities, teachers increase relevancy by integrating these components into class lessons.

Figure 2: Seven themes of Hawaiian CBE aligned with “Best Practices”

Theme	Elaboration	“Best Practice”
PILINA ‘OHANA	Family integration where parents are seen as a child’s first teachers	Active participation of family members in educational activities; Using the community as a setting for student learning
PILINA KAIĀULU	Community integration informed by a Hawaiian sense of place	
HAKU	Original compositions imbued with a person’s experience and spirit	Rigorous assessments accounting for a range of competency and skills
HŌ’IKE	Performances requiring multilevel demonstrations of knowledge and/or skills	
MĀLAMA ‘ĀINA	Land stewardship focusing on sustainability and a familial connection	Place-based and service learning projects promoting community well-being
KŌKUA KAIĀULU	Community giveback embodying the Hawaiian value of lōkahi (unity)	
OLA PONO	Values and life skills that synthesize Hawaiian and global perspectives	Career planning and preparation for global citizenship

## HOW CAN I USE CULTURE-BASED EDUCATION?

### Start with ‘ohana and community

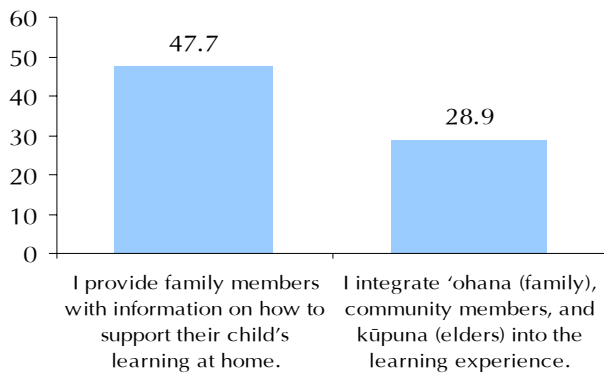
A value of pilina ‘ohana and pilina kaiāulu is that teachers do not have to be experts themselves in providing students with a culturally relevant educational experience. Instead they can harness the knowledge, skills, and experience of family and community members for the benefit of their classes. In essence, pilina ‘ohana and pilina kaiāulu are productive streams that allow the flow of information between students, family, and community in a way that reinforces meaningful interconnections.

<sup>1</sup> One of the seven cultural guiding themes of Nā Honua Maui Ola is ‘Ike Pilina, the value of knowledge gained through shared relationships.

## WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY?

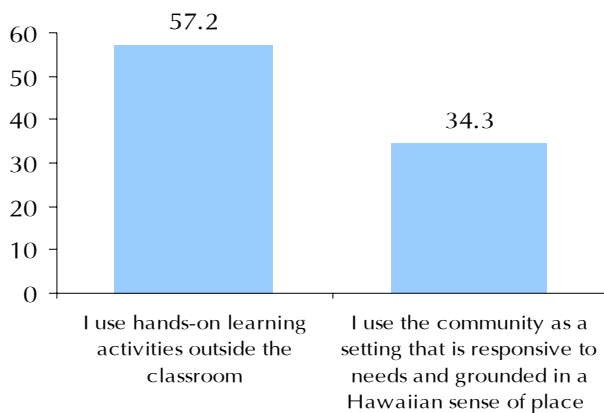
The study data suggest that teachers integrate 'ohana and community to differing degrees. About half of the teachers surveyed say they provide students' family members on a monthly basis with information about how they can support their child's learning at home. However, only 1/3 of teachers implement a "deeper touch" of 'ohana integration one or more times a month (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Percentage of overall teachers who report different levels of 'ohana integration on a monthly basis.**



When it comes to community integration, over half of the teachers surveyed design hands-on learning activities outside the classroom on a monthly basis. While these lessons may or may not be community-based, a smaller portion of teachers specifically use the community as a setting for learning one or more times a month (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Percentage of overall teachers who use hands-on activities compared to community integration on a monthly basis.**



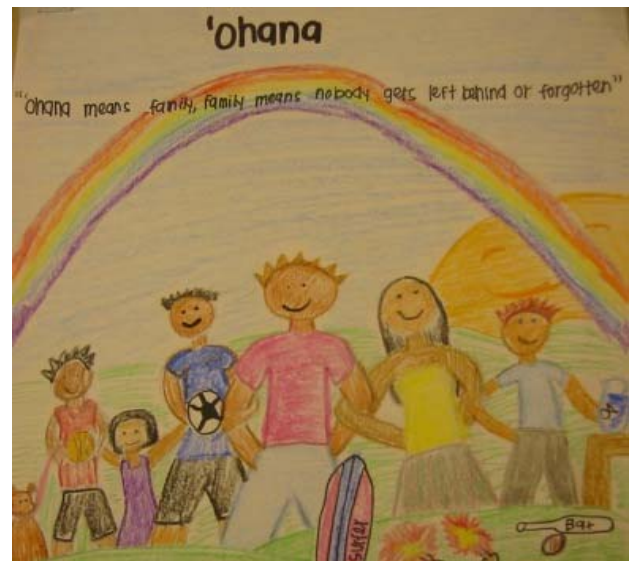
An easy way to begin using culturally relevant educational practices is to expose students to other teachers, namely, persons from the students' own families or communities. Findings from the Nā Lau Lama "Strengthening Families and Communities" working group suggest that because a child's first

teacher is their 'ohana it is important to understand and appreciate family knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

## THREE AVENUES FOR INTEGRATION

The following are examples of 'ohana and community integration reported by participating teachers. Based on survey responses, pilina 'ohana and pilina kaiāulu take place in three contexts: at home, in school, and in the community. The activities described below cut across subject areas and grade levels indicating that all teachers can create spaces for family and community to be woven into the curriculum.

**Figure 5: Student artwork depicting the value of 'ohana**



### Home

There are many ways that teachers encourage family involvement in students' education in the home. Some teachers advocate helping with homework and reading together regularly. Other teachers require students to "talk story" with family members to get information such as genealogy, family stories, and behavioral habits. Additionally, teachers ask students to collaborate with 'ohana members on projects beneficial to their family and community.

#### Example #1: "My Family Roots"

*Applicable subjects: Language Arts, Social Studies*

In this activity, students are taught the importance of culture and heritage to individuals and social groups. They embark on a project where they interview 'ohana members (especially kūpuna) in order to obtain a deeper understanding of their own family roots. Additionally, 'ohana are invited to attend and/or actively participate in student presentations.

<sup>2</sup> Please visit <http://www.ksbe.edu/spi/nll.php> for other successful practices and to see the preliminary findings of the Nā Lau Lama working groups.

*"We do a culture project where the students 'talk story' with their family to find out more of their heritage."*

*Example #2: "Mālama i ka 'Āina/Protect the Land"*  
*Applicable subjects: Science, Health, Environmental Studies*

In this lesson about recycling, water usage, and water conservation, students work closely with their family members to develop a sustainability plan. The family describes how they, as a unit, can help protect natural resources by reducing waste, increasing recycling, and conserving water.

### **School**

The involvement of 'ohana and community in the school setting varies from asking guest speakers to share experiences, cultural knowledge, and life skills, to hosting community members at career fairs and open houses. Students also exhibit their work to family members through student-led conferences and performances.

*Example #3: "Lā 'Ohana/Family Day"*  
*Applicable subjects: All*

Students practice communication skills while demonstrating knowledge gained during the year. In addition to hosting their 'ohana, students are tasked with giving tours, presenting their work, and planning interactive lessons. Family members are treated as special guests whose insight and experience are welcome additions to the curriculum.



*Example #4: "Project Wahiawā"*  
*Applicable subjects: Music, Language Arts, Social Studies, Communication*

In this place-based project, students learn writing skills, oral history research, and music composition. A senior community member visits with students three times a week to facilitate lessons on the history and significance of Wahiawā. The students take what they learn and write a song that is performed at the school's annual May Day program.

### **Community**

Many teachers recognize that the school does not need to be bound by the four walls of a classroom and choose to venture out into the community. They partner with local organizations, businesses, and practitioners so that students can learn and apply knowledge. Oftentimes student work entails a practical service to the community.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

**45.0%** of teachers create opportunities for students to engage in **community service** and/or **service learning** beyond the activities already organized by the school at least two or three times a semester.

*Example #5: "Ka Wai Nui Marsh Field Study"*  
*Applicable subjects: Science, History*

Students learn principles of biology and natural resource management through this study. They work with scientists, who are also Kailua community members, studying and measuring changes occurring at the marsh. In addition, students are given information about historic settlement and land uses of the area. Alumni are welcomed to volunteer as well.

*Example #6: "Lo'i Kalo Experience"*  
*Applicable subjects: History, Science, Math*

In a series of activities, students learn the cultural significance of lo'i, the mechanics of plant irrigation, and principles of agricultural engineering. The class visits Punalu'u twice a year and students help maintain the lo'i by cleaning irrigation ditches and building mud enclosures. Over time, they observe how their efforts contribute to the production of kalo.





## MIXING IT UP

The previous examples demonstrate a range of educational activities that seek to transform the “traditional” learning environment for students through pilina ‘ohana and pilina kaiāulu. Added value can be gained by combining two or more of the seven themes of Hawaiian CBE. For instance, hō’ike and haku provide an excellent avenue for assessment, which can be utilized with a community service project (kōkua kaiāulu) or place-based project (mālama ‘āina). In turn, family or community members may be the best resources to talk with students about life skills and applications (ola pono).

## SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Pilina ‘ohana and pilina kaiāulu are culturally contextualized expressions for what educators have known for some time, particularly, that promoting family and community involvement helps students learn. Research shows that teachers incorporate ‘ohana and kaiāulu into their curricula in many ways. To increase the likelihood that students feel greater affirmation as learners, teachers emphasize the value of relationships and demonstrate the interconnectedness between home, school, and the community. The examples reported here can assist teachers in developing lessons and activities that draw upon ‘ohana and community as culturally relevant educational resources for their students.

### **Mahalo to our Research Advisory Group:**

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### **And, our Charter School Task Force:**

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## A CLOSER LOOK AT THE STUDY

At the state, national, and international levels, culture-based educational strategies are increasingly seen as a promising means to address the education disparities between indigenous students and their peers. *Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education* (HCIE) is a joint research project of Kamehameha Schools, the Hawai‘i Department of Education (HiDOE), and Nā Lei Na‘auao, an alliance of Hawaiian-focused public charter schools. It seeks to understand and share best practices of culturally relevant education in Hawai‘i’s classrooms.

To determine the impact of CBE approaches on student outcomes, such as self-esteem, school engagement, and academic growth, a uniquely interlocking set of surveys was developed for school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. As such, data collected on educational philosophies, and teaching strategies as well as school and home environments can be linked to student outcomes.

The data reported here come from the teacher survey (Culture-Based Education Teacher Tool, CBETT), which includes 600 teachers in 62 schools. Participants represent five islands (Hawai‘i, O‘ahu, Kaua‘i, Maui, and Moloka‘i), including conventional schools and Kula Kaiapuni (Hawaiian immersion) in the HiDOE, Hawaiian- and Western-focused charter schools, Hawaiian-medium charter schools, and Kamehameha Schools.

## WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR HCIE?

Work on the *Hawaiian Cultural Influences in Education* study is ongoing and additional findings will be made available through 2008-09. In addition to 600 teachers, surveys were collected from over 3,000 students and 2,500 parents/caregivers. The next phase of the project will assess socio-emotional and educational outcomes for students tied to degrees of cultural exposure in the home and school.

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For more HCIE information visit [www.ksbe.edu/spi/projects.php](http://www.ksbe.edu/spi/projects.php).



**Suggested Citation:** Ledward, B., Takayama, B. & Kahumoku, W., III. (2008). *Kiki Nā Wai: Swifly Flowing Streams. Examples of ‘Ohana and Community Integration in Culture-Based Education*. Honolulu: Kamehameha Schools, Research & Evaluation Division.