“Our island needs a place for keiki who learn differently, who dream big.”

~ Kani “DrB” Blackwell
Kaua’i’s newest free public charter school is located at the beautiful and lush Kahili Mountain Park. Our innovative program specializes in three main areas: (1) project-based learning, (2) social-emotional learning, and (3) individual learning goals.

Our mission as a project-based K-6 school is to provide a progressive, innovative curriculum that prepares learners for a successful future. We are committed to interdisciplinary instruction with equal emphasis on supporting the whole child academically, socially, and emotionally. Our learners will experience and perpetuate the cultural traditions and values of Hawai‘i while acquiring and demonstrating 21st-century skills needed to lead productive lives and contribute meaningfully to society.

**School Events**

**Costume Parade and Trunk-or-Treat**

Our Costume Parade and Trunk-or-Treat provide another opportunity for our Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i ohana to come together as one. We parade our way around the school to showcase our unique costumes, then out to the field where we have overwhelming support from parents and volunteers. Many dress in costume with elaborately decorated trunks. Volunteers pass out special treats to our learners, including candy, popcorn, school supplies, and local fruit, such as pineapple and coconut!
Multicultural Feast

The Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i Multicultural Feast is a yearly event where the entire community comes together to celebrate the wide range of cultures that make up our ohana! A potluck-style event, the Multicultural Feast allows families, learners, and friends to visit our beautiful campus while sampling foods and gaining an understanding of a variety of amazing cultures. An important part of this annual tradition is the Usborne Book Fair, which not only provides beautiful books for our learners to purchase and enjoy while improving their literacy but also provides free books to the school.

Winter Musical

This year our music facilitator, Elizabeth Lawson, joined our team to guide our learners through musical exploration. During our very first annual Winter Production, she provided learners with the opportunity for learner-led creative voice and choice and assisted in bringing their unique vision to life. Each grade level had an individual twist to their performance as they integrated a variety of musical genres and dance, including classic rock, hip-hop, rap, and instrumental. They also incorporated different languages, such as Spanish, Hawaiian, and sign language.
Alaka’i O Kaua’i curriculum and instruction are integrated into authentic Gold Standard Project-Based Learning (PBL). Not only do facilitators work with a variety of curricula to support personalized learning, but learners have opportunities to follow their passions and set their own unique goals for their education. The Alaka’i O Kaua’i facilitators participate in PBL professional development training every August before the school year starts and throughout the year. Authentic project-based learning is the ideal way to prepare our learners for higher learning in college and the 21st-century workplace.

**Project-Based Learning**

**Ukuleles**

Learners at Alaka’i O Kaua’i develop essential skills for creating music while building character and responsibility too! Through the use of ukuleles, we learn about the origins of the instrument, its history, the culture of the music being experienced, and what events were occurring at the time the ukulele was introduced in Hawaiian culture. Learners begin by constructing their very own ukuleles, sanding and stringing their devices until they reach a perfect tune. Learners then move to tuning, strumming, rhythm, melody, singing, hand coordination, sight-reading, and many other musical skills. Learners develop collaboration skills in building and playing together, and creativity in making their own songs! In addition, they learn responsibility by caring for their instruments, tracking their practice time, and monitoring their progress.
Personalized Learning

Beginning in kindergarten, every learner sets goals in their Individual Learning Plan. These goals are both academic and social-emotional. Learners and facilitators work on these goals throughout the year and keep track of progress in their Leadership Notebooks.

Outdoor Classroom

The beautiful grounds of Alaka'i O Kaua'i provide many opportunities for learning to occur outdoors in the shadow of Mount Kahili. The vast grounds include a pond, orchard, and garden plots.

Why is learning outside so important? An article entitled The Benefits of Learning Outside the Classroom states: “Direct experience outdoors is more motivating and has more impact and credibility. The results from learning outside the classroom can be instantaneous as well as active and, therefore, impact behavior as well as tapping into the learning styles of the more kinesthetic learner. Through skilled teaching, interpretation, or facilitation, learning outside the classroom readily becomes a stimulating source of fascination and personal growth and can lead to breakthroughs in learning. Active learning readily develops the learning skills of inquiry, experimentation, feedback, reflection, review, communication, problem-solving, an enterprising attitude, and cooperative learning.”
Communication

Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i publishes a weekly online message, which is sent to all families and the community. The Monday Message provides a wealth of information on school events, PBL, ways for families to get involved, and technology opportunities/ideas. This is one of the main sources of school information.

MAP NWEA Computer Adaptive Testing

Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i partners with MAP NWEA to assess learners three times a year: fall, winter, and spring. These assessments provide valuable information about the skills and concepts they have already mastered and what they are ready to learn next. MAP, which is an acronym for Measures of Academic Progress is used by more than 9 million students in the US and in 140 countries worldwide. MAP is a computer-adaptive test. If a learner answers a question correctly, the next question is more challenging. If incorrectly, the next one is easier. This type of assessment challenges top performers without overwhelming learners whose skills are below grade level. As an approved Value Added Measurement (VAM), Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i reports the MAP Growth Results to the Charter Commission at the end of the year.

MAP generates comprehensive learner progress reports that predict projected proficiency on state tests, give a nationally normed percentile rank and projected growth target, as well as detailed information about the child’s strengths and areas for growth. These reports are shared with parents upon completion of testing at the school.
Spelling Bee

Congrats to our Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i Spelling Bee champ, Isabella Salamey (4th grade), and all our spellers! We held the Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i Spelling Bee for grades 4-6 in our gymnasium. The spelling bee was open to all of our learners in grades 4-6, who could advance to the district bees. Our top two spellers advanced to the Kauai District Bee with the potential of ultimately going to the state spelling bee and finally the national spelling bee.

Kindness

Right now, the world is experiencing a kindness deficit. Inspired by the National Kindness Challenge, Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i is on a mission to change that by starting a Kindness Club. Learners viewed a video about spreading positivity through sticky notes called You are Amazing to help inspire them to think carefully about the words and actions they release into the world. They discussed examples of kindness they have seen at school or in their community, as well as ways they can spread positivity and kindness at Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i. Learners will continue to meet weekly to collaborate and create projects that they will implement around the school campus to make kindness truly contagious!

Social-Emotional Learning

Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i embraces a whole child approach to education which is defined by policies, practices, and relationships that ensure each child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. The school’s philosophy is to teach to the “whole child” which includes academic, social and emotional development, in a culturally appropriate environment where every child feels safe, loved, and “at home.”

Our school is not merely focused on improving test scores, but provides opportunities for students to develop their full potential by developing leadership skills through the 7 Habits from The Leader in Me and the strengths, skills, and mindsets from Character Lab and ALOHA Hawaiian SEL Competencies.