“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) individualized learning plans.

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 emphasis on supporting the whole child academically, socially, and emotionally. Our learners 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.
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.

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 and social-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 learners to reach 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.
Beginning in kindergarten, every learner sets goals in their Individualized 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.

Alaka’i O Kaua’i partners with MAP NWEA to assess learners three times per 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 this is 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.
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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 titled “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.”
Families at Alaka’i O Kaua’i are highly active in volunteerism, event planning, and raising funds for the school. Despite COVID-19 restrictions, this year families planned many exciting new events for the Alaka’i O Kaua’i learning community, including Trunk-or-Treat, Ninja Warrior Competition, Turkey Trot, and Pizza Fridays.

Learning through COVID-19

Under the most difficult circumstances starting in the spring and extending through the year of 2020, Alaka’i O Kaua’i was able to adapt their educational opportunities as needed to ensure no loss of learning for our keiki throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Our learning community carefully adhered to health guidelines and adapted as required to provide online enrichment, hybrid and on-campus learning with proper physical distancing and the use of our beautiful outdoor classrooms. Our families and staff demonstrated flexibility, adaptability, and dedication to keep our school community and island safe, and in the first half of the 2020-21 school year, we were one of only a handful of public schools in the state of Hawai’i that was open for on-campus education.
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Costume Parade and Trunk-or-Treat

Our Costume Parade and Trunk-or-Treat provide an 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 and elaborately decorate their cars’ trunks. Volunteers pass out special treats, including candy, popcorn, school supplies, and local fruit, such as pineapple and coconut!

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Alaka`i O Kaua`i was able to successfully host a physically distanced Trunk-or-Treat event in October 2020. We were overwhelmed with the outstanding support we received from our learning community and proud of the extra effort put forth by our diligent staff to make this event a reality.

Ninja Warrior Competition

We have fantastic athletes at Alaka`i O Kaua`i who showed their skills in our first-annual Ninja Warrior Competition. This optional, free, fun competition for all grades is based on the popular event American Ninja Warrior and challenges learners to cross a course that includes our two playgrounds. We are incredibly proud of all the courageous keiki who accepted the challenge and all forty-plus participants who finished the course.
Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i hosted our first annual Turkey Trot cross-country running event in November 2020. We were thrilled to have a large number of participants in this fun event, even with lots of rain on campus.

The Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i Charter School Sharing Program invited the learning community to make donations of canned foods December 7-17, 2020. Together, we easily surpassed our goal of 500 donated canned items. Most importantly, as a school that embraces social-emotional learning, our keiki were able to put into practice the key message of sharing. All items collected were distributed through local nonprofit organizations to stay on the island of Kaua‘i.
Spelling Bee

Each year the school hosts the Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i Spelling Bee. The spelling bee is open to all learners in grades 4–6, who could advance to the district bees. Our top two spellers advance to the Kauai District Bee with the potential of ultimately going to the state spelling bee and finally the national spelling bee. In December 2020, we were fortunate to hold our spelling bee in our lush outdoor classroom.

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.

Bus Service

The Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i Board of Directors signed a bus contract with Akita Transportation to provide bussing to the school starting in the fall of 2020. The bus is currently operating at full capacity. This endeavor was made possible through the efforts of many people for numerous years and speaks well of Alaka‘i O Kaua‘i’s bright future.