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## Student projects teach on a different level

By Cynthia Matsuoka — Special to the garden island

Posted: Thursday, Aug 03, 2006 - 10:39:16 pm HST

Editor's note: This is the first part of a two-part story on the benefits of the Aloha 'Ike grant program in Kaua'i's public schools.

Aloha 'Ike is a grant program that supports teachers doing project-based learning for their students. The grant program is the brainchild of the Kaua'i Economic Development Board's education committee.

"The grant program gives teachers an opportunity to look beyond the regular school funding source ... to enhance what they are doing," said Jerry Hill, KEDB education coordinator.

The program seeks to facilitate the application of academic concepts through innovative project-based learning and to develop partnerships with participating companies, institutions of higher learning and other members of the community.

Since 2004, the program has awarded \$64,270 to 18 projects from Department of Education public schools, charter schools and private schools on Kaua'i. The program depends on grants and community support for funding. The latest round of grants for Spring 2006 of \$25,000 was funded by the sponsorship of Hawaiian Telcom.

"People don't know about the greatness of the collaboration between the business community and the schools and the accomplishments of the kids," said Mia Ako, KEDB Finance and Business Development officer.

Three sample projects include: "Proverbial Pictures" at Ke Kula Ni'ihau O Kekaha; "Aquaponics" at 'Ele'ele Elementary; and "Ocean Communities" at Kula Elementary.

Ke Kula Ni'ihau O Kekaha's "Proverbial Pictures" is from the latest round of grants awarded in spring 2006.

"Without grants we would not be able to begin to offer students the myriad of extra curricular activities that make learning in the school so relevant," said

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**American Idol is down to nine contestants. Kauaiworld users predicted Chris would go. Who's your favorite this week?**

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Haunani Seward, principal at Ke Kula Ni'ihau.

Seward said she is always looking for curriculum that integrates the Ni'ihau culture with western standards. She came up with the idea of having students interview their elders about proverbs that are unique to Ni'ihau culture. Students would write and explain the proverbs in Hawaiian and English and take a digital photograph that exemplifies the essence of the proverb.

"Successful programs always rely on cooperation between agencies," Seward said.

For this project, she is receiving support from not only KEDB, but also the charter school administration on Oahu, the Garden Island Arts Council and Digital Arts of Waimea.

"Proverbial Pictures" will begin on Aug. 8 as an after school program that meets two times a week. Students from Kula Aupuni Ni'ihau A Kahelelani Aloha have been invited to join in on the project. At the end of the program, the KANAKA students will take half of the cameras back to their school to teach other students how to use them.

Seward envisions the final products to be matted and framed black and white photos with the Hawaiian and English translations and descriptions. They will be displayed at various functions. She hopes opportunities will arise to have the work showcased at art galleries.

Leighton Kabutan's application was awarded in the fall 2005 round of funding. His project had its beginnings six years ago with a simple third grade hydroponics unit.

When Kabutan moved to teach fourth grade, he introduced aquaculture. He set up aquariums in his classroom and had his students raise tropical ornamental fish. The students sold the fish at the annual 'Ele'ele Elementary School's craft fair so the project could be self-sustaining.

Kabutan said a partnership with Lihue Pet Shop and community tropical ornamental fish enthusiasts who donate fish for the craft sale have been instrumental in sustaining the program.

He ended up mixing the hydroponics and aquaculture to develop aquaponics by floating his hydroponic trays on top of his aquariums.

Kabutan moved to teach the sixth grade. It was then that he built his first facility of three, 300-gallon ponds or above-ground tubs. The funding came from the west complex through No Child Left Behind grant money.

After building the initial facility, Kabutan found it was "really tight" — the children had access only from the front of the ponds and a whole class could not work at the ponds at the same time. His vision was to have a whole class working completely around each pond, with no individual being excluded and no one waiting for a turn.

That's where the Aloha 'Ike grant program came in. He was able to build a walk-in facility with four, 300-gallon ponds. His partner, Aqua Engineers, helped him plan the new facility. Aqua Engineers also brought in other partners like Wellington Fencing Company and A-Vac which donated materials.

In one day, Kabutan said, community and Aqua Engineer volunteers put up the new facility. The Aloha 'Ike funds enabled him to purchase the tubs and solar pumps for an alternate energy source. He was also able to purchase "big ticket items" like aquariums, filter, pumps, water treatment chemicals and water quality treatment kits.

Kabutan is also involved in a partnership with the Department of Land and Natural Resources to raise blue gill fish. Kabutan said he is trying to get blue gill to spawn in captivity. He started with a group last year. "It may be a couple more



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years before we're successful," he said.

Kabutan said the facility serves as a vehicle for his science program. The hands-on experiences help to solidify the learning. "Students do science, rather than just reading about it out of a book," he said.

"Everything is in science," Kabutan said. Student writing has to be detailed and accurate. They have to apply what they learned in math. They have to do scientific observations, which is "more than just looking at things," he said.

Part 2 of the story on the Aloha 'Ike grant program will be in tomorrow's paper.

• Cynthia Matsuoka is a freelance writer for The Garden Island and former principal of Chiefess Kamakahahei Middle School. She can be reached by e-mail at [aharju@kauaipubco.com](mailto:aharju@kauaipubco.com)



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