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# Kanuikapono School Celebrates Learning

When **Kanuikapono Charter School** first opened on Kauai 11 years ago, classrooms were wherever director Ipo Torio-Kauhane could arrange for them, under tents with students sitting on lauhala mats or in the gymnasium or a Kapaa church.

So it was an especially joyful occasion yesterday when the school's teachers, 150 students and their parents held a blessing for three like-new portable classrooms at Kanuikapono's now-permanent Anahola campus.

The classrooms were donated by **Kamehameha Schools**, who had used the buildings for two years while their Kapalama campus on Oahu was being remodeled. "When our construction was done, the portables were practically new. Kamehameha Schools funds 17 charter schools in Hawaii, so donating the portables was a no-brainer," says Liz Ahana, integrated strategies manager for Kamehameha Schools. All 17 schools applied for the portables and Kanuikapono and Kawaikini Charter School in Lihue were the two Kauai schools chosen to receive them.

**Young Brothers** underwrote most of the cost of shipping the classrooms from Oahu to Kauai. "When we saw the barge of classrooms leaving from Honolulu, that was a meaningful moment for us," says Roy Catalani, vice president of strategic planning and governmental affairs for Young Brothers. "We are glad to assist Kanuikapono and Kawaikini charter schools."



**Inspiring Children**

The blessing celebrated more than a new building. It marked the success of a school that blends

traditional academics with hands-on learning, inspiring children from kindergarten through 12th grade and making things taught in school relevant in their lives.

“I like the fact that they teach core values like *kuleana* (responsibility), *ohana* (family) and respect along with reading, writing and arithmetic,” says parent Aaron Leikam, whose son, Tanner, 6, attends Kanuikapono. “They do a lot of projects involving agriculture, aquaculture and our environment and they are really progressive in academics.”

Leikam says children enjoy the small classroom sizes, typically 18 students in each grade from kindergarten through fifth grade, and nine students in each high school grade. “They all get so much personal attention.”

Jessica Gutierrez is impressed with the types of things her son learns at Kanuikapono both in class and on field trips. “One night I asked him what he had learned in school that day and he said, ‘We learned how to measure the volume of a river.’ I was amazed!”

Raye Street’s daughter Lilia, 8, began at Kanuikapono when she was in kindergarten. “Lilia doesn’t want to miss school. She’s stoked to be at school everyday,” he says. “I can’t wait for my son, Jackson, to come here. He’ll be old enough to start in the fall.” A lovely benefit of a school steeped in Hawaiian culture: “Lilia’s hula is amazing.”



As school director, Ipo Torio-Kauhane, gazes upon her students, a sea of children of all ethnic groups, from dark-eyed children with brown hair to many blond hair, blue-eyed little ones, all getting along and learning together, she sees her dream come alive. “When I look out here, I

don't see a school. I see a nation of Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians who value learning.”



Pamela Varma Brown is the author of [“Kauai Stories: Life on the Garden Island told by Kauai's People.”](#) a collection of more than 50 touching, humorous and inspiring personal stories about life on Kauai, where she has enjoyed living for 24 years. Pamela writes a weekly post on [www.kauai.com](http://www.kauai.com)