

Healing Trauma in Hawai'i:

*The Resilient
Communities,
Schools and
Families Project*

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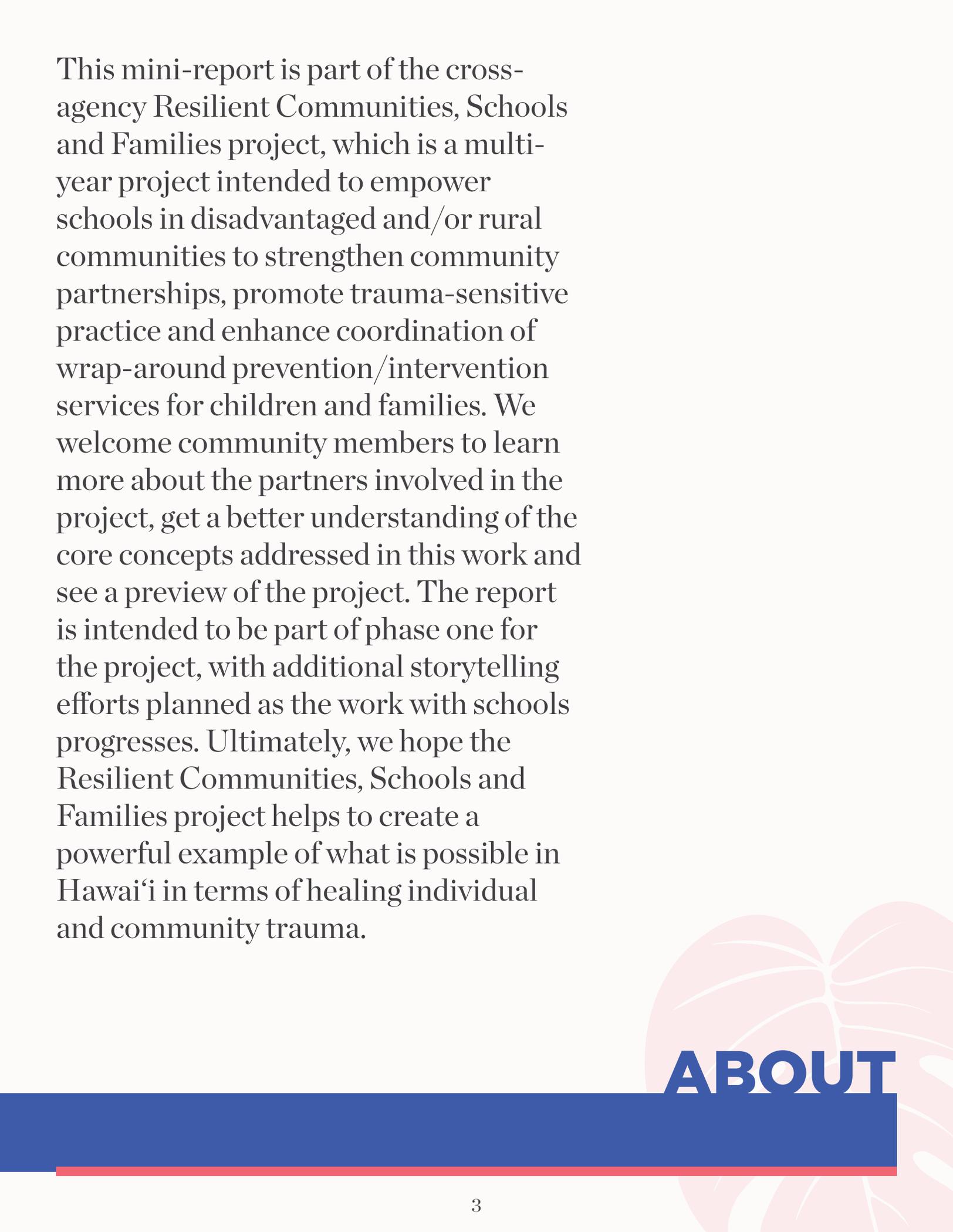
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This mini-report is part of the cross-agency Resilient Communities, Schools and Families project, which is a multi-year project intended to empower schools in disadvantaged and/or rural communities to strengthen community partnerships, promote trauma-sensitive practice and enhance coordination of wrap-around prevention/intervention services for children and families. We welcome community members to learn more about the partners involved in the project, get a better understanding of the core concepts addressed in this work and see a preview of the project. The report is intended to be part of phase one for the project, with additional storytelling efforts planned as the work with schools progresses. Ultimately, we hope the Resilient Communities, Schools and Families project helps to create a powerful example of what is possible in Hawai‘i in terms of healing individual and community trauma.



ABOUT

Ceeds of Peace

Founded in 2012, Ceeds of Peace is a 360-degree approach to raising peacebuilding leaders. We do so by creating community platforms and opportunities for adults and youth, educators, family members, service providers, those in the justice system, business leaders, the faith community and non-profit professionals to work together in our collective pursuit to build sustainable, just, equal, peaceful communities. We share and model tools, activities and best practices to develop leadership skills which we refer to as the “Ceeds” – hence our name, Ceeds of Peace.



The Hawai‘i Afterschool Alliance

Founded in 2014, The Hawai‘i Afterschool Alliance is a network of more than 2,000 individuals and 80 organizations dedicated to supporting and advancing sustainable, quality afterschool and summer learning programs that result in improved academic, social, emotional and physical outcomes for children and families in Hawai‘i. HAA hosts an annual Afterschool Summit and other professional development opportunities, leads the Lights on Afterschool advocacy effort, maintains an out-of-school program interactive map for families, develops the first afterschool quality guidelines and an assessment tool and promotes the Community Schools Model through partnership, advocacy and other capacity building efforts across the state.



Papa Ola Lōkahi

Papa Ola Lōkahi (POL) was established in 1988 by Congress through the Native Hawaiian Health Care Act using the E Ola Mau (1985) findings that reported on the health disparities of Native Hawaiians. As a community-based, non-governmental entity, the kuleana of POL is to “raise the health status of Native Hawaiian to the highest possible level.” This is done through strategic partnerships, programs and public policy. POL also services as the body in which federal agencies enter consultation around issues related to Native Hawaiian health and policy. The Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems (five located across Hawai‘i) and the Native Hawaiian Health Scholarship Program is also administered through the Native Hawaiian Health Care Improvement Act and Papa Ola Lōkahi.



KEY PARTNERS

Kamehameha Schools

Founded in 1887 by the legacy of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, Kamehameha Schools (KS) is a private, educational, charitable trust committed to improving the capability and well-being of the Native Hawaiian people through education. In 2015, KS embarked on a bold voyage that envisions, in one generation, a thriving lāhui where learners, grounded in Christian and Hawaiian values, achieve postsecondary educational success and become leaders who contribute to their communities both locally and globally.



**Kamehameha
Schools®**

HawaiiKidsCAN

Founded in September 2017, HawaiiKidsCAN: The Hawai'i Campaign for Achievement Now is on a journey to the future of public education in Hawai'i – one in which all keiki have access to great schools, regardless of their zip code. This movement uses research and communications, grassroots organizing and direct advocacy to make that bright vision of the future a reality.



University of Hawaii at Hilo Center for Place Based Social Emotional Learning

Led by Margary Martin, Ph.D., the University of Hawaii at Hilo Center for Place Based Social Emotional Learning. Dr. Martin will be leading the evaluation component and part of the Steering Team for the Resilient Communities, Schools and Families project, providing expert guidance on operationalizing the Community Schools approach in Hawai'i.



**UNIVERSITY of HAWAII®
HILO**

KEY PARTNERS CONT.



The Challenge:
*Trauma-Sensitive
Education Overview*

How is “trauma-sensitive education” defined?

In the mid-late 1990s, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in collaboration with Kaiser Permanente, published a groundbreaking study¹ that started a narrative and brought awareness to the detrimental effects of exposure to traumatic events as a child, or what the study refers to as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). “Trauma”² is a term that is used to describe a wide range of experiences and situations, including factors such as physical or emotional abuse or neglect, substance abuse or violence in the home, incarceration of a parent and more. The CDC found ACEs to be common,³ including about 61% of adults surveyed across 25 states who identified experiencing at least one ACE as a child and about 1 in 6 reported experiencing more than four types of trauma. When we consider other traumatic experiences⁴ such as bullying, periods of homelessness, systemic racism or episodes in the foster care system, the number of children facing some type of adversity grows larger, especially in Hawai‘i.⁵

An alternative framing from ACEs is the Benevolent Childhood Experiences (BCEs) assessment, that flips the perspective from deficit-based to asset-based. The BCE assessment includes responses to questions including childhood access to caregivers, good friends and caring teachers.⁶

Historical trauma across generations is also a factor, particularly for descendants of groups that have suffered significant injustices, including events such as the Holocaust, African American slavery, and the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom and those of other indigenous communities.⁷ These experiences can have a potentially long-lasting effect on children’s cognitive functioning and physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being.

Intervention is crucial to mitigating the detrimental effects of childhood trauma. Implementing trauma-informed, or trauma-sensitive, practices in schools can have a significant impact, including improvements in behavior, fewer suspensions and expulsions and improvements in academic achievement.⁸ With quality trauma-informed training for educators and school staff, schools can better support students to feel engaged and connected with teachers and peers. Trauma-sensitive training gives educators the tools to be responsive to the social, emotional and behavioral needs of their students.

At the same time, trauma-informed practices are valuable for staff and administrators themselves, better enabling them to support each other and students. In fact, if staff are not equipped to recognize their own triggers, psychological stimulus that prompts recall of a previous

¹“About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study,” last modified April 2, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/about.html>

²Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014. Retrieved from <https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma14-4884.pdf>

³“Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences,” last modified December 31, 2019, <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/aces/fastfact.html>

⁴“Massachusetts Advocates for Children (MAC). “Helping traumatized children learn.” <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-problem-prevalence/>

⁵Klest, Bridget et al. “Trauma Exposure and Posttraumatic Symptoms in Hawai‘i: Gender, Ethnicity, and Social Context.” *Psychological trauma: theory, research, practice and policy* vol. 5,5 (2013): 409-416. doi:10.1037/a0029336

⁶Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-athletes-way/201909/17-item-checklist-g geared-neutralize-early-life-distress>

⁷Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://www.hawaiipublicradio.org/post/psychologists-say-historical-trauma-hawaiian-resilience-play-out-mauna-kea#stream/0>

⁸Osher, David. “Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI): Trauma-sensitive schools descriptive study.” (2018).

traumatic experience, they may actually risk further traumatizing students. This includes being able to manage vicarious trauma, a phenomenon generally associated with the “cost of caring” for others, which is the emotional residue of exposure that counselors have from working with people as they are hearing their trauma stories and become witnesses to the pain, fear, and terror that trauma survivors have endured. Vicarious trauma may impact the staff member’s professional and personal effectiveness and capacity.⁹

It is helpful to distinguish between the terms “trauma-sensitive” and “trauma-informed” in order to recognize the different roles of schools and behavioral health providers. The term “trauma-sensitive” helps emphasize that educators are not expected to take on the role of therapists. It also highlights that, while behavioral health services will be an important part of the effort, helping traumatized children learn at school requires more support, such as a school-wide culture that helps children feel safe and supported in all parts of the school.¹⁰

⁹Retrieved 11/24/20:<https://www.counseling.org/docs/trauma-disaster/fact-sheet-9---vicarious-trauma.pdf>

¹⁰Retrieved 11/24/20:<https://traumasensitiveschools.org/frequently-asked-questions/>

¹¹Retrieved 11/24/20:<https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-solution-trauma-sensitive-schools/>

What does implementation look like?

While specific elements may vary slightly, the components of a trauma-informed school often generally include:¹¹

- A shared understanding among all staff about the impact of ACEs and BCEs
- The school supports all children to feel safe physically, socially, emotionally and academically
- Working towards a common goal of building wellness and resilience, the school addresses student needs in holistic ways, taking into account their relationships, self-regulation, academic competence and physical and emotional well-being
- The school explicitly connects students to the school community and provides multiple opportunities to practice newly developing skills
- The school embraces teamwork and shared staff responsibility for all students
- Leadership and staff anticipate and adapt to the ever-changing needs of students

How does this approach benefit children?

There are many benefits to children at trauma-sensitive schools, including:¹²

- Improved academic achievement and test scores
- Improved school climate
- Improved teacher sense of satisfaction and safety in being a teacher
- Improved retention of new teachers
- Reduction of student behavioral outbursts and referrals to the office
- Reduction of stress for staff and students
- Reduction in absences, detentions and suspensions
- Reduction in student bullying and harassment
- Reduction in the need for special educational services/classes
- Reduction in drop-outs

Social-Emotional Learning

Closely related to the concept of trauma-sensitive schools is social-emotional learning (SEL), or social and emotional learning. SEL is a whole child approach to education that is not intended to be limited to only supporting students experiencing trauma, but many of the same principles resonate.

SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships and make responsible and caring decisions. SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction and ongoing evaluation.¹³

SEL at schools has been shown to produce positive youth development - such as social-emotional skills, attitudes and indicators of well-being - across K-12 and across race, socioeconomic background or school location. Additional outcomes such as graduation and safe sexual behaviors also illustrate SEL's improvement of critical aspects of students' developmental trajectories.¹⁴

¹²Retrieved 11/24/20: <http://www.traumainformedcareproject.org/resources/>

¹³Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://casel.org/what-is-sel/>

¹⁴Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cdev.12864>



There is no academic learning without social-emotional learning.

-Paula Adams: Executive Director, Hawai'i Afterschool Alliance



What is the current state of trauma-informed educational programs in Hawai'i?

Important initiatives have been underway for more than a decade in Hawai'i as a part of the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), including with the Hawai'i Departments of Health, Human Services, Public Safety, and Judiciary. SAMHSA grant work has also provided support to schools in Waianae, Windward, Central Oahu and East Honolulu schools.

A number of initiatives have launched in recent years to focus on education. The below examples are by no means exhaustive and mostly represent some of the larger efforts.

Project HI AWARE is a multiyear, federally-funded project in the Nanakuli-Waianae, Leilehua-Mililani-Waiialua, Kau-Keaau-Pahoa complex areas, which staff receiving training and assistance in evidence-based mental health interventions, case management, data collection and analysis, anti-bullying initiatives and strategies to engage families and augment community resources.¹⁵ Outcomes in Nanakuli-Waianae have included graduation rates rising from 65% to 85%, falling suspension and referral rates, two schools with no suspensions and teacher retention decreasing 40%+ from 119 vacancies to 57 vacancies.¹⁶

Act 271 was passed by the Hawai'i State Legislature to create a task force to create a system for evaluating and assessing all children and those who are exhibiting emergent or persistent behaviors, academic challenges or chronic absenteeism and are in need of appropriate supports and interventions accessible within the continuum of a multi-tiered system of supports. Recommendations included utilizing Project HI AWARE for best practices, engaging the community to partner with schools at all three tiers to support trauma-sensitive practices, establishing a complex-level team focused solely on trauma work and many more suggestions for reforms at the system and school levels.¹⁷

¹⁵Retrieved 11/24/20: https://www.nwcomplex.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=566999&type=u&pREC_ID=890544

¹⁶Retrieved 11/24/20: https://www.capitol.hawaii.gov/Session2020/Testimony/HB2412_HD2_TESTIMONY_EDU_03-11-20_PDF

¹⁷Retrieved 11/24/20: http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/Reports/DOE_REPORTS2019_Report%20on%20Report%20on%20Act%20271%20%282019%29.pdf

HIDOE's Ho'o ikaika: Trauma Recovery Project is part of a five year federal demonstration grant to increase the number of students receiving trauma-specific mental health services from the provider that best meets their needs, the number of parents reporting satisfaction with trauma-specific mental health services received under this grant that address the child's trauma symptoms, the number of students who receive trauma-specific mental health services and improve school attendance. The Ho'oikaika project envisions partnering with state-licensed providers. The purpose of this project is to utilize the expertise of each agency and assist each other with the provision of comprehensive trauma-specific mental health services to eligible students. The intent is to enhance the quality of care for these students and their families to improve their educational outcomes. The project has merged with the goals of Act 271 and has carefully selected a core group of regional school partners to build the demonstration of impact.

A wide range of other individual schools and complex areas — including Castle-Kahuku, Kailua-Kalaheo, Hana-Lahainaluna-Lanai-Molokai and Kapaa-Kauai-Waimea — have leveraged trainings from renowned experts such as Godwin Higa, Kristin Souers and the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. Programs like the Kailua High School Violence Prevention Lunch Groups engaged students who were at risk for failing in school due to repeated suspensions for fighting or other problems that compromise the students' ability to attend school regularly. The lunch groups were designed to improve the students' attachments to school, ability to find peaceful solutions to conflict, anger management skills and positive peer and leadership skills through a number of organized activities. Ultimately, regular participants in the program increased their attendance rates.

Legislators have shown a strong interest in advancing trauma-sensitive education. Before the 2020 legislative session was disrupted and ultimately ended by the Covid-19 pandemic, several initiatives were being considered by the legislature:

Requires the DOE to establish a three-year pilot program for the development and implementation of a trauma-informed education program in the Castle, Kailua and Kalaheo complex areas, based on the Nanakuli Waianae complex area trauma-informed education programs and report to the legislature.



HB2412

Establishes a task force to develop trauma-informed approaches for the Department of Education. The task force would include representatives from numerous government agencies, thus facilitating stronger coordination around comprehensive supports and resources.

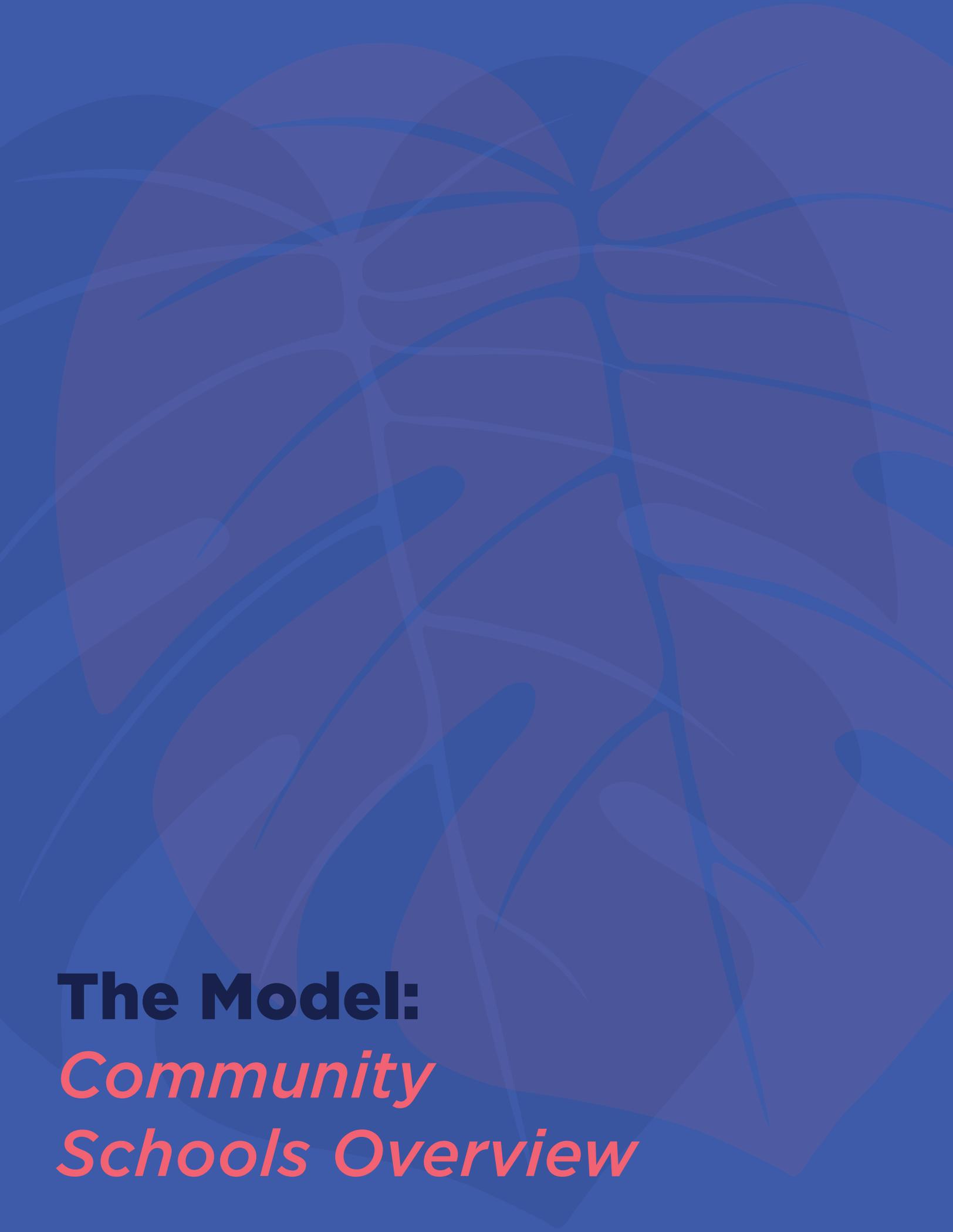


HB1986

Resolution urging the reduction of children's exposure to adverse childhood experiences by investing in preventive health care and mental health wellness interventions, including Native Hawaiian cultural practices.



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The Model:
*Community
Schools Overview*

What do Community Schools look like?

¹⁸Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://www.nea.org/student-success/smart-just-policies/community-schools>

With origins dating back to the late 1800s in Chicago, the Community Schools Model centers around six pillars of practice and four core implementation mechanisms:¹⁸

Pillars of practice

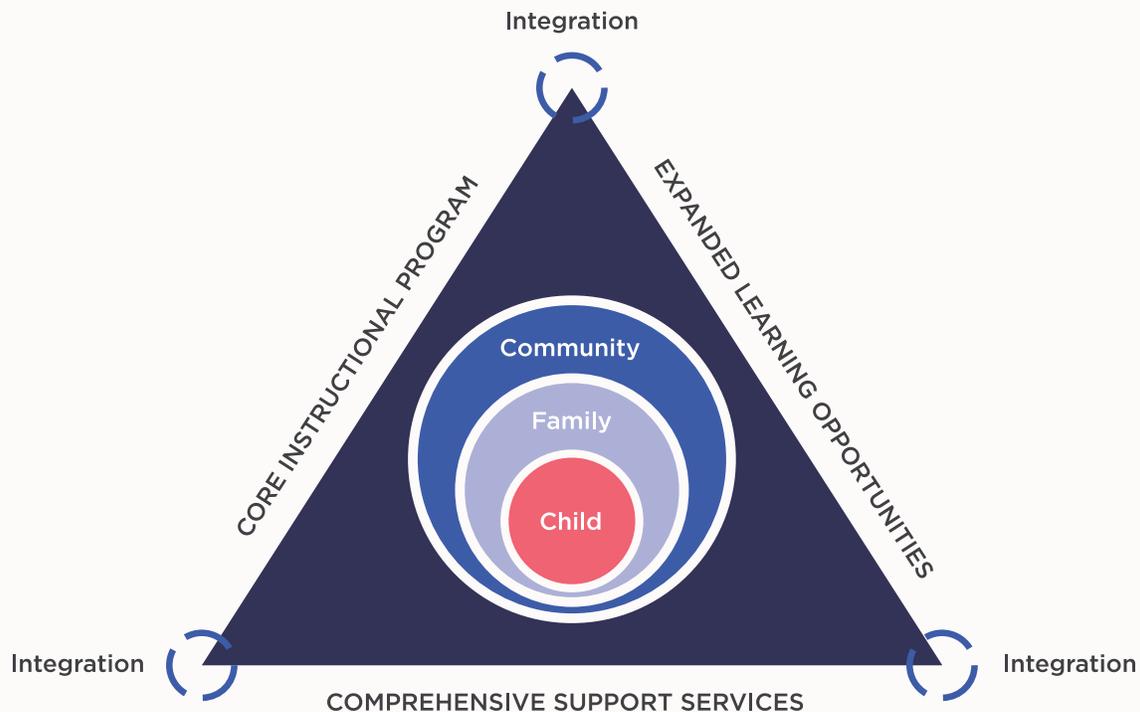
- Strong and proven culturally relevant curriculum
- High-quality teaching and learning
- Inclusive leadership
- Positive behavior practices (including restorative justice)
- Family and community partnerships
- Coordinated and integrated wraparound supports (community support services)

Implementation mechanisms

- Community School coordinator
- Needs and assets assessment
- School stakeholder problem solving teams
- Community School stakeholder/partner committee

¹⁹Retrieved 11/24/20: https://www.nccs.org/sites/default/files/resource/NCCS_BuildingCommunitySchools.pdf

The Developmental Triangle



The foundations for community schools can be conceptualized as a Developmental Triangle that places children at the center, surrounded by families and communities.¹⁹

Best practices and examples

About 100 school districts have taken on the community schools strategy at scale. One such district is Union Public Schools in Oklahoma, which considers itself a district that has adopted a Community Schools approach. The district's eight elementary schools — which all receive federal Title I funding — have a community schools coordinator on staff and two schools have full-service medical clinics on-site. These are available to the community as well. In addition, mental health providers see students throughout all district schools and families have access to districtwide clothing support. The Tulsa City-County Health Department also offers nutrition programs and health and wellness programs for students, as well as demonstrations for parents. The Oklahoma Caring Foundation offers free immunizations for all students. Additionally, community schools in the district offer a range of early childhood programming and adult education. Based on standardized test scores, an external evaluation that controlled for individual student poverty and the diffusion of the strategy in a school concluded that Union's community schools have narrowed the achievement gap between low-income students and their more affluent peers.²⁰

While there is no one governing body that certifies community schools, the Coalition for Community Schools promotes Community School Standards as a way to codify and articulate a framework for quality implementation and growth.²¹

The National Center for Community Schools also recognizes a range of diverse models across the nation that feature characteristics of community schools.²² The organization also regularly recognizes excellence across the nation for individual community schools and collaborative initiatives.²³

²⁰Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-k-12/reports/2018/08/22/454977/building-community-schools-systems/>

²¹Retrieved 11/24/20: <http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/Page/Community-School%20Standards-2017.pdf>

²²Retrieved 11/24/20: https://www.nccs.org/sites/default/files/resource/NCCS_BuildingCommunitySchools.pdf

²³Retrieved 11/24/20: http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/2015_community_schools_awards_profiles1.aspx

What is the process to develop a community school?

The process to develop a community school is marked by multiple phases of work:²⁴

Developing a Vision and Strategic Plan:

Develop a vision and plan with specific action steps and timelines in order to start and operate your community school efficiently. Anticipate potential challenges that could slow down the process and plan ways to overcome them.

Building a Leadership Team:

An important component of a community school is the joint effort and interaction between the school and community. A site leadership team that consists of school leaders, teachers, community partners & leaders, parents, students and recent graduates will help to drive the vision, implementation, evaluation and sustainability of the strategy at the school site level.

Needs and Capacity Assessments:

Community schools have the capacity to address many of the community's needs and so the programs and supports that your school offers should be targeted towards those needs. Assess what the needs of your students, families, school leaders and communities are and develop a plan to address them effectively.

Sharing Space and Facilities:

Taking advantage of limited space effectively is an important factor of an efficient community school and maintaining an effective balance of partnerships located in and around the school is crucial to doing so. There are three main types of settings for community school partners: partners that are located within the school full-time, those that use school space for programming but are not permanently housed within the school and those that do not operate using space within the school directly.

Financing your Community School:

Community schools operate on the theory that opportunities and supports will be offered and leveraged through partnerships aligned with the school, such that new funding and/or redirected funding is used to finance the community school coordinator, who then leverages funding, programming and services from partners. Seed funding can help form the infrastructure of your community school but requires a sustainability plan in place to sustain the efforts. Principals need to think critically at the school's budget, community partners, community foundations or a combination in order to fund the coordinator.

²⁴Retrieved 11/24/20: <http://www.communityschools.org//startingacommunityschool/>

Research and Evaluation for Continuous Improvement:

The Community Schools Evaluation Toolkit is designed to help community schools evaluate their efforts so that they learn from their successes, identify current challenges and plan future efforts accordingly. It provides a step-by-step process for planning and conducting an evaluation at your community school site(s).

Community Schools in Hawai'i

Perhaps bolstered by a strong inherent sense of community values and kuleana, Hawai'i has some bright spots in adopting the Community Schools Model. In particular, schools in the tight-knit communities of Hāna and Kohala have been listening to the needs of its students, staff and families, displaying strategies to support the development of all the members of the community.

Community Schools across the country have stepped up to support their students and families and have been able to do so more effectively and efficiently than traditional public schools because they have a Community School Coordinator ready to organize resources and coordinate supports and services with community partners.

In Hawai'i, we've seen community schools in the Kohala Complex, in partnership with Partners in Development Foundation, step up to find additional resources to create a Resilience Hub to support their community. The Resilience Hub provides child care for teachers and families, so teachers can focus on teaching and families can re-enter the workforce as the economy opens up, without worrying about leaving their children home alone. The Hub provides a safe space for children to do their distance learning with adult support and participate in enrichment activities. The Resilience Hub also created new jobs, supporting the local economy and families who've lost work due to the pandemic.



**- Jennifer Masutani:
Program Director, Hawai'i
Afterschool Alliance**

The Community Schools model is an excellent approach that weaves in the community and the school setting. It builds a bridge between school and community, acknowledging the important connection our communities have in raising our children. Whereas in the past, the parents were primary caregivers for children, things have shifted over time with the increase in multiple parents in the household being employed. Community Schools recognizes the important part the community, such as local organizations, after school programs, and community members play in contributing to the overall well-being of a child.



**-Ivey Cruz:
Education Director,
Ceeds of Peace**



The Approach:
*Resilient Communities,
Schools and Families Project*

The Resilient Communities, Schools and Families project builds upon the best practices of trauma-sensitive approaches and the Community Schools model to create sustainable conditions for schools to better serve students and families, ensure even the most at-risk youth have access to services necessary to thrive within their school, homes and communities and develop a tailored operational approach that builds capacity for schools to strengthen community partnerships.

Goals

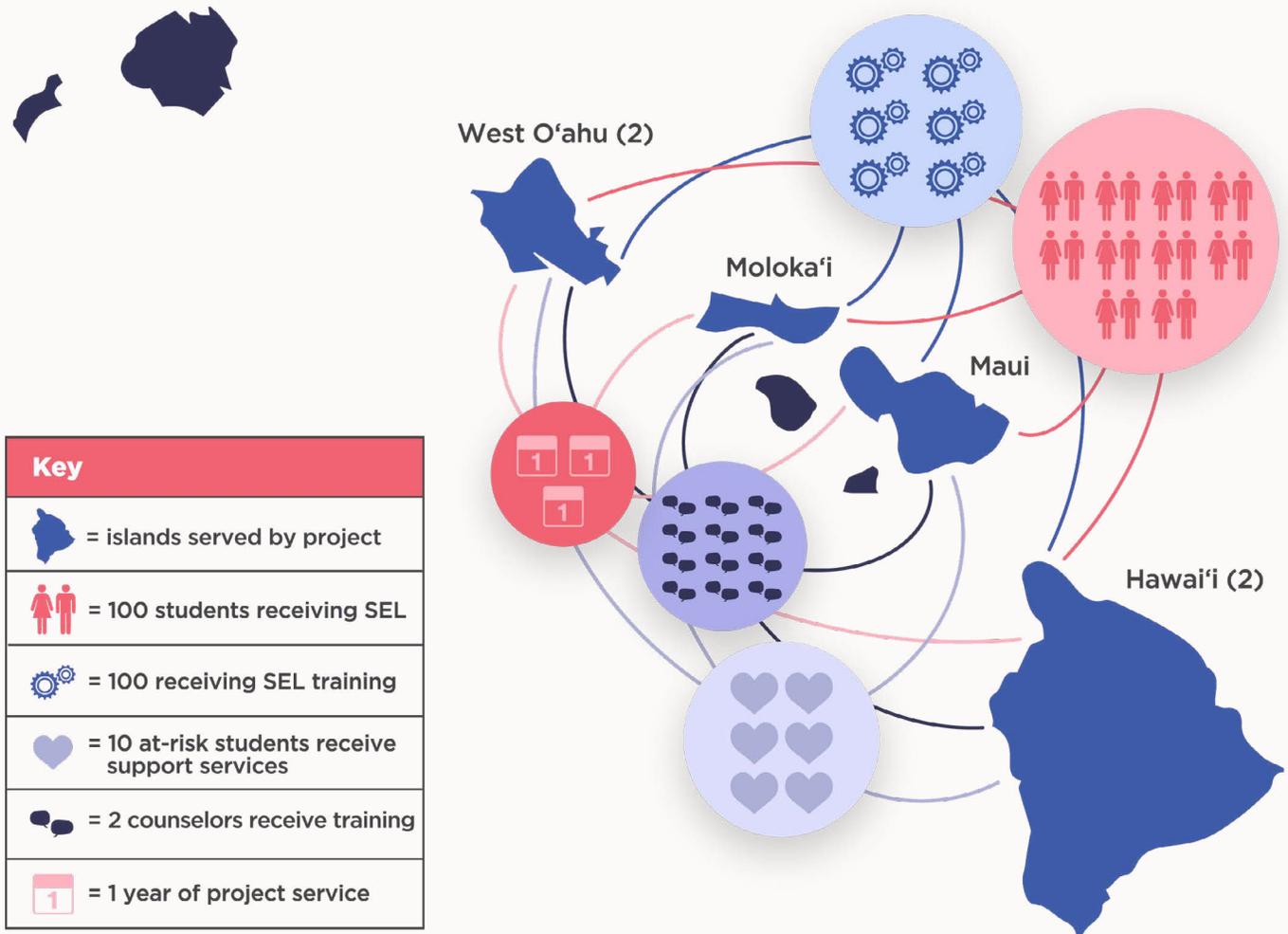
Over three years, the project will serve six rural, remote and otherwise disadvantaged elementary schools on the islands of Moloka'i, Maui, Hawai'i (2) and West O'ahu (2).

At least 1,000 students will receive social and emotional learning (SEL) to gain social and emotional competencies integral to their healthy development (Tier 1)

600 teachers, staff and community partners receive training on SEL and trauma sensitive pedagogy

60 at-risk students and their families will receive specialized support through Student Resilience Plans and delivery of comprehensive support services (Tier 2)

12 school counselors will receive specialized American School Counselor Association training



*Note: numbers may be adjusted based on school needs.

Preparing schools

The project is a collaborative initiative between schools, social service agencies and community organizations to authentically engage them to embrace a mindset shift toward a whole child approach. This is not about narrowly defining success and requiring compliance, but rather an opportunity for schools to honestly reflect on their assets and challenges and ultimately buying in to refining their current practice around wrapping around the whole child. Once schools are selected based on need and meeting a suite of criteria, they will collaborate with the project team to assess the needs of their local communities and produce an asset map of their current programs, activities and prior staff trainings.

Continuum of training and support

Teachers, support staff and community partners will receive professional development from experts in the field in a trauma-sensitive, multi-tiered system of support. Foundational areas of focus include developing competencies with both Trauma Informed Practices (TIPS) and SEL, with additional utilization of Native Hawaiian health practices, peacebuilding and action planning. In addition, school counselors and school-based behavior health coordinators will receive American School Counselor Association training to help students focus on academic, career and social-emotional development. This national model is centered around a set of professional standards and competencies, including mindsets grounded in a belief in the potential of all children, a strong professional foundation in theory and practice, skills to ensure students have access to direct and indirect supports and the knowhow to effectively assess student needs and create plans to address gaps.²⁵

Building student resilience

At the core of this project, 10 at-risk Tier 2 students and their families per school will receive specialized support through Student Resilience Plans and delivery of comprehensive support services. Similar to the intent of Individualized Education Plans used for special education services, the Student Resilience Plans are a vehicle for students, educators, parents and support organizations to align around the whole child needs of vulnerable students and develop together the proper interventions for each student. The delivery of Student Resilience Plans will occur through a support team called “Resilience Hui” which are structured to ensure diverse representation of adult supporters who have received training in TIPS and SEL, have an established relationship with the student and are able to provide multiple perspectives on the overall wellbeing of the student: namely, the school counselor, school-based behavioral health and the family facilitator.

²⁵Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/asca-national-model/templates-and-resources>

Throughout the family engagement process, the Resilience Huis will be intentional about how to guide progress and track outcomes.

Why this project: Healing Cultural, Historical and Intergenerational Trauma in Hawai'i

The Resilient Communities, Schools and Families project addresses a dire need to better support students' holistic wellness and mental health needs. For example, Hawai'i has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the nation. In its 2017 report, the CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that 1 of 8 middle school students had attempted suicide. Furthermore, the Adverse Childhood Experience Study found that survivors of childhood trauma are up to 5,000% more likely to attempt suicide. Similarly, the ACLU released a 2019 report finding Hawai'i has disproportionate referral and suspension rates, especially of Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students who are suspended - 3x times the national average. Given these staggering statistics, it is therefore no surprise that less than 50% of public-school students are meeting academic standards.

Hawai'i also has a unique context in that addressing broader cultural, historical and intergenerational trauma is especially important. For Native Hawaiian youth, this kind of trauma can be felt across makua and kūpuna, recognizing years of impact from colonization and the loss of sovereignty. This real trauma includes but is not limited to the loss of land, language and cultural identity.

At the same time, Hawai'i is able to draw on incredible assets to promote healing and resilience from a community perspective. For example, the ahupua'a concept relies heavily on a connected community of interdependent individuals and families. Other data points speak to Hawai'i's uniqueness of connections, including that Hawai'i ranks first in the United States for the most multigenerational families sharing a roof, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, some of which is due to cultural norms present in the Native Hawaiian, Asian American and Pacific Islander communities that make up a large percentage of the state.

In Hawaii, healing cultural trauma can be linked to and is grounded in initiatives such as the Hawai'i Department of Education's Nā Hopena A'o (HĀ) framework, an example of place-based SEL.²⁶ These six values or outcomes are designed to be interdependent and provide a more holistic model of student growth and success. Similarly, another culturally-grounded concept is Ho'oponopono, the Hawaiian system for 'setting it right' and restoring individual and community harmony and balance. It promotes acts of healing interpersonal conflicts and is relationship-centered and not agreement-centered. It often involves forgiveness. During Ho'omalū,

²⁶Retrieved 11/24/20: <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/TeachingAndLearning/StudentLearning/HawaiianEducation/Pages/HA.aspx>

practitioners sit in solitude and gather strength prior to speaking one's true feelings. With all family members working together, the goal of Ho'oponopono is making peace and building a strong community.²⁷

The connection between trauma, healing and Hawaiian culture in particular is unique and special. There are particular elements of Hawaiian culture that honor, are inclusive, and conducive to healing; which may not be the case in mainstream society. Hawaiian culture recognizes the whole being, our interconnectedness, our connection to 'aina and place, genealogy of our ancestors, and the importance of nature for healing, as well places central emphasis on family and community. Hawaiian culture makes it conducive for healing, for recognizing and acknowledging trauma within oneself and in our communities.



-I-vee Cruz:
Education Director,
Ceeds of Peace

Why this project: Addressing the impact of Covid-19

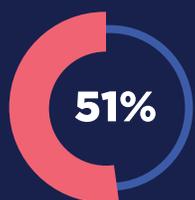
Given these existing troubling statistics for youth mental health in Hawai'i, there is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic will exacerbate these challenges. According to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll, nearly half of Americans report the crisis is harming their mental health. A federal government mental health emergency hotline registered a more than 1,000% increase in April compared with the same time last year. Several models exist – based on data collected after natural disasters, terrorist attacks and economic downturns – showing a likely increase in suicides, overdose deaths and substance use disorders. Data from Mental Health speaks to the impact of youth, with younger populations including teens and young adults (>25) being hit particularly hard by anxiety and depression. In May, these populations were experiencing higher rates of anxiety and depression than any other single age group. Anxiety rates were around 80% of screened participants. 90% of screened participants were also experiencing symptoms of depression.²⁸

With Hawai'i suffering a 22% unemployment rate – one of the highest in the nation – Hawai'i youth will be especially impacted by trauma, with parents and families increasingly struggling to make ends meet. For residents and households with children under the age of 18, the impact has been dramatic:²⁹

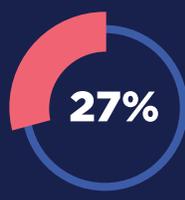
²⁷Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://www.ceedsofpeace.org/hooponopono/>

²⁸Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://nationalhealthcouncil.org/blog/mental-health-america-data-shows-impacts-of-covid-19-on-mental-health/>

²⁹Retrieved 11/24/20: https://www.boh.com/siteassets/files/boh_f_covid-19-in-hawaii_final-report_070120.pdf



have seen their combined household income decline



have someone who was furloughed



have sought assistance from a food bank or food distribution drive



have been unable to work due to lack of child care



have sought assistance from a local charity

From March-July 2020, the Hawai'i State Department of Education (HIDOE) Grab-and-Go school meals program provided over 1.3 million school meals for breakfast and lunch to children ages 18 or younger at nearly 80 public schools and community locations on O'ahu, Kaua'i, Maui, Moloka'i, Lāna'i and Hawai'i Island.³⁰ With continued distance learning, the program was extended from October-December 2020 for lunch at 203 schools.³¹

³⁰Retrieved 11/24/20: <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/ConnectWithUs/MediaRoom/PressReleases/Pages/Grab-and-Go-wraps-up.aspx>

³¹Retrieved 11/24/20: <https://www.khon2.com/coronavirus/does-grab-and-go-meal-program-will-be-at-203-hawaii-public-schools-this-fall/>

Resilience is typically defined as the capacity to recover from difficult life events — the ability to withstand adversity and grow despite life's downturns. The Kaua'i Longitudinal Study — a multi-decade study focused on a cohort of nearly 700 children — found the greatest protective factors that impact a child's long-term resilience are the presence of a meaningful adult relationship in their lives, peer-to-peer support and the presence of at least one fulfilling activity. Similarly, studies have found that strengthening protective factors may be even more important than reducing risk factors for indigenous youth.

I have seen more students hospitalized due to suicidal ideation over this first semester of the school year than all of last school year. Over the last five years, hospitalization due to suicidal ideation has been getting progressively worse. Many students are failing classes due to being unable to navigate distance learning.



**- Shelly Andrews:
School Counselor,
Kailua High School**

Covid-19 has had a tremendous impact on our youth's mental health in Hawai'i. We've heard from youth themselves that mental health is a concern because they are isolated from their friends and do not have the same social supports as before. Youth from the 2020 Children and Youth Summit voted to create a youth mental health hotline as one of their top five legislative priorities. They are asking for more resources and opportunities to have positive and constructive conversation about mental health.



**- Jennifer Masutani:
Program Director, Hawai'i
Afterschool Alliance**

The long term goal of the Resilient Communities, Schools and Families project is to build long-term resilience, well-being and community abundance. As such, the project goes beyond communities and children merely surviving difficult situations, but finding their own strength and thriving. We hope to cultivate a spirit of hope and possibility to support the holistic wellbeing of the students of today and tomorrow.

Sign up [HERE](#) to learn more for updates, stories and opportunities to learn more.

Resilient Communities, Schools and Families project inquiries:

Ivee Cruz
Education Director
Ceeds of Peace
(808) 381-4631
ivee.cruz@ceedsofpeace.org