



Other editions: [Mobile](#) | [E-news alerts](#) | [RSS](#) | [Twitter](#)

Find it: [Site Map](#) | [Coupons](#) | [Apartments](#) | [Dating](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Real estate](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Subscribe](#)

honoluluadvertiser.com

Find what you are looking for ... Search



Thursday, February 4, 2010

[HOME](#) [LOCAL NEWS](#) [SPORTS](#) [BUSINESS](#) [MY ADVERTISER](#) [ISLAND LIFE](#) [TGIF](#) [OPINION](#) [MULTIMEDIA](#) [BLOGS/FORUMS](#) [CLASSIFIED ADS](#) [HELP](#)



[Comment, blog & share photos](#)

[Log in](#) | [Become a member](#)

HAWAII'S **Complete** SOURCE

Posted at 1:04 p.m., Monday, January 21, 2008

Outdoor education touted at Kihei charter school

By CLAUDINE SAN NICOLAS

The Maui News

KIHEI — The ocean, wetland areas and a graffiti-painted bunker have all become places of learning for students at the island's new charter middle school.

What separates the Kihei Charter School Science Technology Engineering and Math Academy from other middle schools on Maui is its emphasis on providing outdoor and hands-on learning experiences.

The middle school campus is housed in what used to be the offices of the Maui Economic Development Board in the Maui Research & Technology Park. There are dozens of computers in classrooms where the school aims to develop student analysis and problem-solving skills by offering a curriculum based on science and math activities.

More than half the time, though, the academy's students are riding in school vans to swim in the ocean, comb the Waihee wetlands and engage in community service projects like painting over graffiti etched on a bunker on Mokulele Highway.

They've studied and sketched Hawaiian petroglyphs modeled after the ones they've seen on a hike in Olowalu, and they've contributed to a Hawaiian fishpond restoration project in Kihei.

The school has just finished its first semester, fulfilling a goal of providing science- and math-based activities, while at the same time meeting state public school requirements to cover lessons in language arts, social studies, physical education and art.

The goal of the middle school is to "provide a good education to our students," lead facilitator Daniel Kuhar told The Maui News.

"We're not trying to create science geniuses. We're not trying to create technology geniuses," added Kihei Charter Executive Director Mark Christiano.

Instead, Kihei Charter's middle school approaches education by taking its students out of their classrooms and into their environment as much as possible.

"We think it's the most authentic learning experience," Christiano said.

Educators including those in Hawaii have long talked about the importance of hands-on learning, and making lessons relevant to a child's life. "We do that," Christiano said.

Academy 6th-grader Amber Osterstock had an environmental awakening when she swam with classmates in the ocean to study, among other things, algae and turtles.

"Algae is becoming a big problem, and it's threatening to take over our ocean," she said.

ADVERTISEMENT
Ads by Adblade™

 **\$78 R/T From ?**
It's true: Airfare from only \$78. Get the Top 25 weekly deals email & Save up to 50% on travel! [Learn more](#)

 **How to Stop Joint Pain!**
Suffering with joint pain? Click here. Shocking joint relief discovery by Cambridge, MA researchers... [Learn more](#)

 **Mortgage APRs Hit 3.62%**
Only 85,000 homeowners have taken advantage of Obama's refinance plan. Calculate new payment. [Learn more](#)

 **Stop Drowning In Your Own Debt**
The government urges Americans to pay down credit card bills. See if you qualify for debt relief. [Learn more](#)

 **\$13 Car Ins?**
6/17: Obama backs new insurance regulation. See if you qualify for new 2010 rates starting at \$13/mo [Learn more](#)

[Add Your Link Here!](#)

ADVERTISEMENT

Employer 360 **Castle Medical Center**
Adventist Health



Exceptional Medicine by Exceptional People

Roll Over To View Our Videos

Instead of seeing the ocean as a "place filled with sharks," it has become a "place we need to take care of," she said.

Now, whenever she goes swimming, Osterstock said she finds herself removing algae from the ocean and having a better appreciation for the water.

Twelve-year-old Joe Graves, also a 6th-grader, said he never gave much thought to the ocean or how science might affect his daily life until he enrolled at the middle school.

"I'm more interested in science now," he said. "And I like to go into the water."

Celina Bekins, an 11-year-old from Mililani, Oahu, commutes to the Kihei charter school, living with her grandparents in West Maui on weekdays and traveling back home on weekends.

"I like the interaction we're having and how we actually do things, not just talk about things," Bekins said.

She said she has especially enjoyed taking digital photos of turtles in the ocean off Makena and learning how to identify each turtle by looking at the distinct patterns on their shells.

Bekins said she also likes the school's small enrollment of 48 students, 24 each in the 6th and 7th grades.

"It's not all that hard to make friends," she said.

While lessons are often based on science and math, the school also provides students with opportunities to study other subjects, Osterstock said.

"We do (also) focus on the arts," she said.

Last week, students were taken last week to La Perouse Bay, not to study marine life, but to write haiku, a Japanese versed form of writing, with a set structure often using nature as its subject.

Osterstock also enjoys drama, which is offered as an after-school activity.

Meanwhile, she has developed her computer skills, teaching herself Web site design. Her school-work at the academy has provided her the opportunity to learn the Photoshop and Excel software programs, and she also has learned how to give PowerPoint presentations.

Kuhar said many of the students are enjoying the outdoor learning experiences. "My hope is that through these experiences they'll learn and take pride in their community," he said.

The school has developed its outdoor lessons with the help of partnerships with several community organizations, cultural groups and government offices, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary and the Maui Coastal Land Trust.

The school has asked a group of local engineers to review the students' entries for the Maui District science fair.

"We plug into the community as much as possible," Kuhar said.

In one other partnership, data collected by the middle school students on algae is being used in a study led by a doctoral student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Kihei Charter middle school will accept a new set of 24 students for school year 2008-09. Registration has not yet begun, but information about the school can be seen at kiheicharter.org.

For more Maui news, visit [The Maui News](#).

There have been a lot of people
wondering about the recall.

Get The Facts ↘



National Partners: [Apartments.com](#) [Cars.com](#) [CareerBuilder.com](#) [Homefinder.com](#) [ShopLocal.com](#) [Metromix.com](#) [eHarmony.com](#) [4info](#) [USA Weekend](#)

Local partners: [101 Things to Do Around Hawaii](#) [Hawaii.com](#)

[Home](#) | [Local news](#) | [Sports](#) | [Business](#) | [My Advertiser](#) | [Island Life](#) | [TGIF](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Multimedia](#) | [Blogs/Forums](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Help](#) | [Site Map](#)

[Terms of service](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [Contact us](#) | [About us](#) | [Work for us](#) | [Gannett Foundation](#) | [Subscribe](#)

©COPYRIGHT 2010 The Honolulu Advertiser. All rights reserved.

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Rights](#) , updated March 2009.