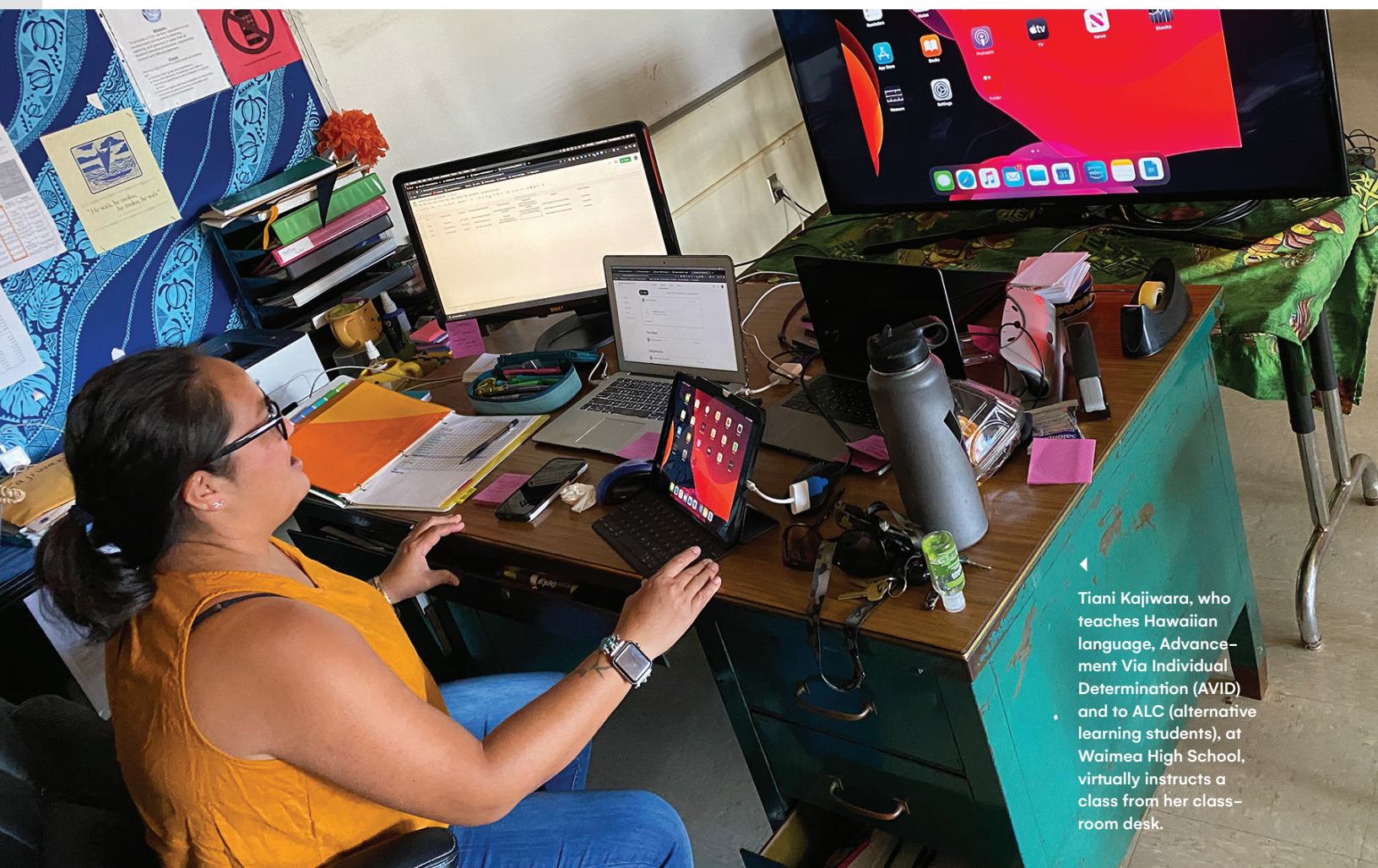# Learning Together

HAWAI'I COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
Amplify the Power of Giving

Working toward a more equitable school system

THANKS TO THE QUICK ACTION OF GENEROUS DONORS, more than $540,000 was raised over the summer of 2020 to fund the Kauaʻi Education Technology Pilot Program. The project aimed to meet the immediate needs of the crisis by ensuring that Kauaʻi's public school students had access to distance learning and teachers were equipped to start online learning by the start of the 2020-2021 school year. The pilot gave school administrators the opportunity to leverage philanthropic dollars to redesign and implement a better, more equitable school system on Kauaʻi.

Tiani Kajiwara, who teaches Hawaiian language, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and to ALC (alternative learning students), at Waimea High School, virtually instructs a class from her classroom desk.

Moving quickly for Kaua'i's public school students

The COVID–19 pandemic upended many aspects of our lives—and attending school was no exception. At the end of the final semester of the 2019-2020 school year, schools had to quickly shift to remote and distance learning. Soon after, principals, superintendents, and teachers identified access issues for certain students.

In late May, Senator Ronald Kouchi and superintendents Bill Arakaki and Paul Zina commissioned a survey of the Kaua'i District to better understand connectivity issues related to distance learning. Due to financial and geographic barriers, 8% or 746 students lacked Internet access at home, and 33% or 3,078 did not have a dedicated computer for their schoolwork.

Anticipating that the pandemic wasn't going away anytime soon, Kaua'i Complex Area leaders and Sen. Kouchi created a plan to ensure each student received a quality education throughout the crisis. Donors were fast to respond, giving a collective $540,000 that was used to purchase devices for students and train teachers on new platforms. Fifteen teachers, one from each public school on Kaua'i, attended Chaminade's Train the Trainer course for online teaching methods and pedagogy.

Now on the second semester of the 2020-2021 school year, Kaua'i's public schools are functioning on a combination of online and blended learning, meaning online and in-person. With the basic need of accessibility met through the pilot program, educators are able to evaluate how to better address and continue adapting to inequities in our education system during the pandemic and beyond. For instance, implementing new, online learning platforms empowers students to learn at their own pace while giving teachers specific insight into student performance. Since this tool can be used both in-person and virtually, teachers can check on students and provide individualized curriculum without students having to raise their hand.

One less barrier to learning

As she entered her senior year at Kapa'a High School, Taylor Chang picked up a laptop from a drive-thru event at her school. Without it, she was going to have to share a computer with her sister who is also doing distance learning, meaning one would possibly have to miss class while the other was using the device. Having a computer dedicated to her was one less thing Taylor and her family had to worry about during the crisis. Taylor is among the approximately 9,330 Kaua'i Complex Area students who received accessibility support thanks to the Kaua'i Education Technology Pilot Program.
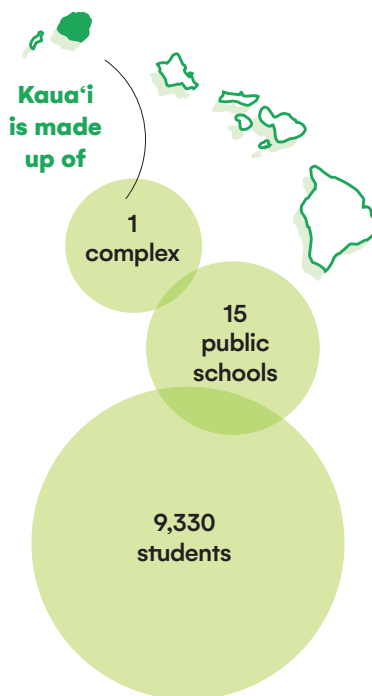
THE CHALLENGES

A snapshot of Kauaʻi's schools at the start of the pandemic

At the end of the 2019–2020 school year, many teachers, students and families were in crisis mode. With massive lay-offs, health concerns, and more, community members were scrambling to shift to new norms, all while students needed to continue in their learning. "We had kids and families who didn't have the right kind of bandwidth at home to log on," says Waimea High School principal Mahina Anguay. "Sometimes there's up to six kids in a house studying together because auntie has to go to work. The older student is watching several cousins and siblings and their home Wi-Fi couldn't sustain this."

Kauaʻi is made up of

1 complex

15 public schools

9,330 students

746

Kauaʻi students lacked adequate internet access due to financial and geographical reasons

3,078

Kauaʻi students did not have a laptop dedicated to their learning

"We saw the effects of COVID take a toll on our students and realized we had to move quickly to not let the equity income divide widen. Committed to this mission and looking out for their most vulnerable students, teachers and educators moved swiftly so that students were set up for success in the 2020-2021 school year. These efforts wouldn't have been possible without the trust of generous donors who helped support the fund,the committed educators on Kauaʻi and the community itself."

Senator Ronald Kouchi, Hawaiʻi State Senate President

THE IMPACT

Phase I - Getting kids connected

In the summer months of 2020, donors gave a total of $540,000 to swiftly meet the pandemic's effects on Kauaʻi's students. The program has strategically leveraged funds, so far spending just over half of the total dollars to cover the cost of training teachers on new platforms and providing devices for students who needed them.

↑ 94.25%

With needs met, Kapaʻa High School's attendance rate rose to 94.25%, a more than 4% increase from the end of the 2019–2020 school year

780 hotspots distributed (sometimes two if needed)

$292,859 out of $540,000 was used from the total dollars granted.

Remainder of funds are allocated for online, multi–school language courses, teacher equipment upgrades, device repair and replacement and potential partnerships for virtual early college programs.

$292,859

Phase II – A redesign that looks beyond COVID-19

While funding from the pilot program helped schools rapidly shift from in-person to online learning, it also gave leadership a perspective that good instruction can be delivered in many ways. This perspective has allowed administrators and teachers alike to think outside the box about their school design and foster a culture of change necessary for breakthrough student achievement results. Currently in Phase II, the key is building a systemic approach that supports the new perspective, evolves the current school design, and ensures results are realized effectively and efficiently.

PPP stands for: people (teachers), **processes** (curriculum), and **platforms** (like online learning tools). Together, PPP makes up the foundation of our school system, and where change needs to occur to make the largest impact.

> "
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> *"The challenge for us was, 'How can we make this a positive change?' We found immediate and long-term solutions to serve our students through this crisis and beyond—and it became possible through the investment of donors. They have given us the opportunity to leverage changes caused by the pandemic as strengths not weaknesses."*

Paul Zina,
Kaua'i Complex Area Superintendent

▶ **Personalized teaching-learning –** At the heart of the program is the personalization of education so all students can achieve their potential. By shifting from a people-centric model to the right mix of PPP (see definition in sidebar), administrators and teachers can better respond to diverse factors in student learning, such as style, pace and circumstance. For example, Meleana, a senior at Kapa'a High School, says distance learning is working for her. "I just noticed that I'm an independent learner and it was so much easier to get my work done," she said. Luke, a senior at Waimea High School, says being at home with his siblings and pets is distracting, making it challenging for him to focus. He also struggles with the high hours of screen time, including attending online classes and then completing his homework on the computer. The most successful school system will be able to simultaneously support students like Luke and Meleana and those in-between.

▶ **Redesign focus –** Up until now, schools have largely focused on only test results without taking a look at why students might not be achieving the desired scores. Rather than focusing on test results alone, schools need to go deeper and reevaluate their designs to understand what is working well for students and where gaps need to be filled so students could be better supported. Through this project, schools are being guided on how to use tools such as analytics and visual frameworks to better assess how students can perform better.

▶ **Visual frameworks –** To put a plan in motion, a visual framework is needed. Visual frameworks in the form of charts and graphs break down complicated, complex ideas into something simple, understandable, and most importantly, actionable. Visual frameworks help show principals what their school designs look like—including specific disconnects, gaps and bottlenecks—so they can be more strategic in their school improvement. Visual frameworks can also illustrate how to best collaborate with school and community resources and input.

The Kaua'i Education Technology Pilot Project
Report 2021

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