

Pu'ohala elementary School open it's doors to Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'o Pu'ohala in 1990. We were the first Hawaiian language Immersion on the Windward side of O'ahu and the third Immersion School in the State.

The D.O.E. asked the Windward district principals if someone would like to have this new Hawaiian Immersion pilot program at their school, Mrs. Lois Mui, Pu'ohala's principal took on this challenge.

Mrs. Mui along with Kupuna Keala Medeiros asked parents of the school if they would be interested in having their incoming kindergarten child be in this program. Kupuna Keala Medeiros came to ask me if I could put my daughter Kameleonalani in this program. I was already involved with the school for my oldest son Pomaika'i. Our decision to be a part of Ke Kula Kaiapuni 'o Pu'ohala was a life changing experience for us.

We started the first class with 18 haumana. The day before school started the kumu was taken to another school. Our principal called for the district Kupuna to come and help. Kupuna Vivian Lee came in as our kumu. There were no books, no learning materials and no one wanted this program at Pu'ohala.

All of the Makua and kupuna helped to get this class working. Kupuna Lee called for other kupuna to come and help. We had Kupuna Hale, Kupuna Punua, Kupuna Wright, Kupuna Terayao, Kupuna Pu'u, Kupuna Alapa'i, Kupuna Medeiros, Kupuna Alvero, Kumu Ulu Kanahale and Kumu Ipo Wong. All of them were Manaleo...Our keiki learned from the best. We met every Thursday night to cut and paste books, learn the language help in the class. Two weeks into the school year, Kupuna Hale named us Papa Makua, and said we have to form a parent board to meet every Thursday at the school and start fundraising for this class. We became a non-profit 501c group the following year. We were called Papa Makua and we met on every third Thursday. We struggled the first year, we could not get help from the office staff, librarian and some of the teachers. One teacher Ms. Jean Tanimoto shared her kindergarten curriculum and all of our kupuna translated it into Hawaiian. We could not get our keiki after school till we went to the class and said " hui, hele mai, pau ke kula... It was pretty scary for many of our parents, we were all just learning the language. Our kupuna stayed and helped the entire year. We also started a Papa 'Olelo Hawai'i. The parents learned the language, cut and pasted books the kupuna translated, sold peanuts to buy more books, had a 'ohana gathering from the 18 students which was a bigger group then the school PTA.

We had No'eau Warner and Makalapua Ka'a'awa checking in on us every now and then, but no help from the other two school's Waiau and Keaukaha. W stood strong as others pushed us down, we went to the legislators to fund us. Mr. Ken Ito always checked to see if I needed help.

It's a lifelong journey and commitment.

*Carol E. Pa'ao'ao*