Come join us in the journey of discovery! This is a quick update of the Kau Project—an education project based on the idea that in every community there are problems, but also solutions to these problems hidden right before our eyes. The Kau project helped Define an educational problem the Marshallese parents and students along with educational professionals in the Kau Complex all agree upon. They then explored its current perceived causes, challenges and constraints, common practices, and desired outcomes. The community then Determined the presence of students and families that have already overcome the problem. The Ocean View community is now poised to Discover uncommon but successful behaviors and strategies through inquiry and observation. They will soon Design activities to allow their community to practice the discovered behaviors. Throughout the entire process schools and community work together to Monitor and Evaluate the resulting initiative which further fuels change by documenting and sharing change as it occurs. This helps the community discern project effectiveness.

Remember: Data drives the train. In order for this sort of initiative to work, there must be data to prove effectiveness.

October 2011

The Learning Coalition—a private foundation www.thelearningcoalition.org, (TLC) invited PACT to write a grant application in support of the Kau Project. It was agreed that DOE’s English Language Learner (ELL) program would pay for the “practice” part of the project, or Phase Two, matching TLC’s funding.

Five Tips for Leaders Who Want to Try Positive Deviance

1. Build the reflex to focus on what works despite all odds instead of what does not work or what is lacking.
2. Present the project by insisting on the fact that it is voluntary: your employees/families need to feel free to participate, or not.
3. Recruit a large number of people, not just those who are directly concerned with the problem.
4. Promote the reframing of the problem so it motivates, is operational, and measurable.
5. Watch out that you do not take control of the process: the group must be able to discover deviants by itself and virally assume ownership of the desired practices. You should thus be the catalyst of the project, not its author or its manager.

Rojel Jackson, Manit Im Ejmour Alliance (MIEA) secretary, explains her picture. She shows us in pictures how this education project fits into the groups activities and how it will help the Marshallese community.
November 2011

Write and submit grant for The Learning Coalition. Continue dialogue with the Marshallese community on ensuring their ideas get incorporated into the project proposal.

December 2011

Funding granted by TLC to begin the project.

Set up preliminary meetings with MIEA. They decide to begin the project in January, 2012 after the holiday season.

A 30 hour per week position on Hawaii Island is approved for a Program Specialist I who speaks fluent Marshallese. Informal job advertising begins through various Pacific Island groups.

Seek discussions with University of Hawaii College of Education professors to see if any are interested in collaborating on an Internal Review Board (IRB) process, data support and/or write-up of the project. This goes nowhere at the time.

January 2012

Worked with the MIEA members to introduce them to the concept of Positive Deviance (PD) and discuss the preliminary problem statement of 96% of Marshallese students living in the Kau Complex are reading below grade level. With community input this was changed to 96% of Marshallese students living in the Kau Complex never exit the English Language Learner program. We also began the community mapping process with the MIEA members.

Preliminary talks occur with Naalehu Elementary School principal. She is very supportive of the project and wants to work together to improve student outcomes.

Biting off more than you can chew: Key Activities I Wish We Knew Then...

One of the underlying foundations for this work was to get the Marshallese and educational communities within the Kau Complex to come together as one community. While this was not a stated goal it is logical to think that as a community concerned about their children/students that everyone wants communication to improve and all ships to sail in the same direction towards college and career ready students. Have we been successful in improving communication between these entities? Yes, I think we have with limited success at this time. Upon self-analysis, our work would have been more efficient if we concentrated more heavily in the Marshallese community alone and as the center of the project before getting the schools so deeply involved. This would have allowed the families time to dig into the PD work prior to engaging with the schools thus allowing them to better work with the schools from a strength base. By having them come together prior to some family members being ready, they are put into a position of feeling inadequately equipped.

What would I have done different next time? Allow the families to invite the school staff into ‘their world’ once the families were more comfortable with the PD approach and had a better handle on data, a problem statement and already had proof of key successful behaviors.

Community Mapping Begins. Jonithen Jackson and Thompson Murphy guide Janine Aberg as to where the road to Volcano National Park should be placed. Jonithen (blue shirt) is the cultural leader of the community, Thompson is an elder and Janine is Jonithen’s adopted daughter. All are members of MIEA.
February 2012

2/1 our first Marshallese community meeting organized around a Wednesday evening church service. Unforeseen complications arose during this meeting and there was much finger pointing about the issue of Marshallese student behavior and common practices around the problem statement. Our debriefing brought us together as a team and we vowed to have another community meeting.

Training for 1.5 days of MEIA members on the basics of PD.

2/17 second community meeting occurred with 35+ adults and 12 children attend. At this meeting we discussed student struggles then broke up into groups by age and sex to create art so all people could contributes to this issue. See examples. Common themes included isolation, fights on the bus, separation between ethnic groups, going to bed late and missing the bus. Too much play and not enough studying. The children spoke more about the number of books the kids read and the level of effort put forth by the children. Seven ladies volunteered to work with us in the future.

Cheat sheets created and Skype training of three MEIA members to visit families who could not

The church space prepared for Wednesday night prayer session.

This thoughtful drawing explains a recent experience as a Kau HS graduate who speaks very little English. He is the dark haired student sitting in the back of the class with the empty seat in front of him. He has a strong sense of isolation and separation between ethnic groups and the teacher – indicated by the vertical arrow between teacher and student. Notice the pencil in the hand of the student to the right and none in the artists’ hand.

Here Junior is showing us the difference between the Marshallese kids in regular classes and those in ELL. His accompanying testimony states the kids in the regular classes work harder and read more books while the ELL students play with paper airplanes and don’t listen to the teacher.
March 2012

**Preliminary meeting with** Kau High School/Palaha Elementary (KHS) leadership. They invited us back to meet all staff later this month and invite volunteers from the school to work with us.

**KHS meeting with** faculty and staff to introduce the project and invite their volunteer participation. 50+ attendees, 22 volunteers opted in.

**Turned in IRB** request for the project to University of Hawaii with Dr. Kathleen Ratliffe.

**Hired Walter Lanwi**, father of seven children (six attending area public schools) to support the project on the ground and to act as a liaison between Marshallese community, school and the project.

**Community creates a Kau** Project forum and Facebook page (KauProject Big Isle) to share information among those interested. Facebook is especially prominent in the Marshallese community as a form of communication using their phones.

April 2012

**4/18 preliminary meeting** with Naalehu Elementary leadership. They invited us back to meet all staff later this month and invite volunteers from the school to work with us.

**4/25 Naalehu El. meeting with** entire faculty and staff to introduce the project and invite their volunteer participation. 40+ attendees, 22 volunteers opted in.

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This picture (left) created by Jeff shows how the students activities and energies are going towards cigarettes, tobacco, marijuana and alcohol rather than school. He also explains how when these vices are used by adults it can cause tears in the home and the happy children become sad, especially when Dad is kicked out.

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**Self-Analysis/Lessons Learned**

Three issues keeps rearing their ugly head with this project; poverty, distances and physical health. With diseases such as diabetes, kidney disease and cancer at high rates in the community, there are significant rates of illness. Because community members play an important part in care and emotional support during times of strife, there are unforeseen delays and well meaning volunteers needing to bow out and care for family. This has been true for MEIA members, families and friends. Boils also seem to be a chronic issue and effects the general health of all ages, effecting school attendance and work.
May 2012

5/1 We begin hunting for Marshallese students who grew up on Hawaii Island but are now in college. To date we have been told there are a few, but no definitive scholars so far.

5/5 Marshallese families are requesting a visit to University of Hawaii at Hilo. Walter will help to coordinate this activity with the parents, Kau High School (KHS) and UH Hilo for October.

5/23 Our KHS meeting has led to a Youth Challenge Informational meeting for Marshallese families. This is the first such event ever. Nine families attend. Two families follow through with applications and one accepted into this graduation alternative program. These are the first Marshallese in the Ocean View community ever to attend!

5/23 32 student consent forms have been signed by parents to participate in the Kau Project.

Why is This Project Taking So Long?

Personal behavior change is never easy. Now, try changing the behavior of an entire community—talk about a challenge! In the Kau Project an entire community is wanting to improve their children’s chances of school success by improving school attendance rates. It would be quicker to simply bring in one more expert to tell the community what to do, and how to do it. This would be short lived and ineffective. In order to lay a foundation for success to ‘stick’, adults and students alike need to understand the problem, agree it is a problem, and see their role within the problem as a student, parent or educator. They are also more likely to adopt new behaviors if they originated from family, friends and neighbors. Both are essential for permanent change. In the Kau Project we are taking the slow and steady route of having the community discover success already within their midst then set up ways for the rest of the community to embrace and practice these discovered behaviors. In PD we say “you need to go slow to go fast”.

“People do not turn their backs on what they have created themselves!” Dr. John Lloyd

Example of Data the Core Group is Using to Understand the Problem of Absenteeism—Naalehu Elementary, Micronesian Student Data, 100 Total Students, School Year 2011-2012
June 2012

6/1 Problem Statement BBQ brings together teachers, parents and students to come up with a motivating problem statement.

6/5 Data has been received on Marshallese student absences at both Naalehu and Kau schools. This data has been priceless in giving us a baseline of information to work from.

We have met the 50% mark! Consent forms have been collected from 50% of Marshallese families with children attending Kau Complex schools. These forms will then help us collect the data needed to find our goal-meeting students.

Announcement made at two Ocean View churches sharing the community goal of 9 or less absences per student. Core Group asks for feedback. Approximately 70 adults are present.

The Final Problem Statement and Community Goal is chosen!!

After much talking, arguing and gnashing of teeth a goal and subsequent problem statement have been chosen and agreed upon by the Marshallese community of Ocean View and the educators at Naalehu El. and Kau High/Pahala El.

Community Goal: All Marshallese students attending school within the Kau Complex will have 9 or less absences in a school year.

Community Created Problem Statement: During the 2011-2012 school year 73% of all Marshallese Students attending school within the Kau Complex have 9 or more absences each year.

Interesting 2011-2012 Data associated with the Problem Statement *

- The average number of Marshallese student absences between 7th and 12th grade at Kau Middle and High School is 33 per student.
- At Naalehu Elementary School there are 100 Marshallese students enrolled with 40 of them missing 20 or more days each year.
- The kindergarten class had a total of 510 absences from 25 students. 5th grade had the least absences with 50 total absences.
- There are 37 students who meet the goal of 9 or less absences each year. These students are potential Positive Deviants for the project to discover and learn from.

* Data Source: Longitudinal Data System 6/5/12
July 2012

7/1 Data posters have been created and posted at 10 key areas from Kona to Ocean View. Approximately 80 posters were distributed to Marshallese community members describing the goal of 9 or less absences per student as well as the average student absence rate of 33 per year—equating this with being fired from a job.

Posters displayed in nine key gathering places along the Kona Coast - parks, churches, computer café, laundry mats and grocery stores. More are distributed to families during the Marshallese Softball and basketball tournaments on Kona Town.

7/18 & 7/22 Protestant Church and Assembly of God church announcements made on baseline attendance records and reminding people of the community goal.

Migrant Education job opportunity at Naalehu El. is announced at the churches in Ocean View—two Marshallese parent apply and one is chosen! She begins in September. When asked why she applied for the position her answer was “because I really want to help our children succeed. I did not know we were having such struggles until they made the church announcements about poor attendance.”

“My why do I like this project? Because I see hope in the eyes of our families”. Core Group Member

“I don’t have dreams for my children, my son has his own dream to be a pilot. I feel my job is to help him see his dreams come true. That is why I am here today”. Core Group Volunteer’s answer when asked whether she has dreams for her children
**August—September**

**Forming the Core Group** of teachers, parents and students to tackle the issue of student absentee rates. This group is key to success and allows us to tap the expertise of each individual.

**8/24 Core Group data** training to help the community understand how schools keep attendance records.

**8/27-29 Training begins in** Kona with adult interviewing team. We review aggregate data to ensure comfort amongst the team. We review individual student data and begin whittling down the students to discover positive deviants using inclusion and exclusion factors created by the core group. Day three included practicing interview skills, selecting interviewing roles (interviewer, scribe and observer) and practicing these skills. The group begins formulating “question realms” they wish to ask the families.

**Ruthine & Yumila attend** the Thursday afternoon Ladies Group reminding them of The Goal and give an update on project activities. Many of these women (young adults to community elders) have children attending schools from Waimea to Pahala.

**9/10 Three adults and two teenagers begin interviewing** the four Positive Deviant families and five students in Ocean View. They have also chosen two non-PD families and several students to interview as a comparison. Discovered behaviors will be shared and vetted by the en-

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**QUESTION REALMS OF INFLUENCE AROUND ABSENTEEISM**

- **Adverse circumstances (car breakdown, rain, church events, etc.)**
- **School day morning activities**
- **School day evening activities**
- **Weekend activities and expectations of children and family members**
- **School day after school activities**
- **Student Question Realm**
- **Family Question Realm (including students)**
- **People at the school/home that help you and how they help (mentors, motivators, good teaching skills)**
- **Homework and reading activities that occur outside of school time**
- **Extracurricular Activities they enjoy**
The Sieving Process to Discover PDs in Kau

Total Marshallese students attending Kau Complex Schools in School Year 2011-2012 (baseline)

- 154

Marshallese students who meet The Goal of 9 or less absences per school year

- 37

Marshallese students who have signed consent forms that meet The Goal

- 22

Marshallese students who meet all inclusion criteria to be considered Positive Deviants

- 5

Positive Deviants

Criteria Chosen by Marshallese Core Group Members to Discover True Positive Deviants to Interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must be Marshallese</td>
<td>Lives outside OV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lives in Ocean View</td>
<td>Lives in OV but attends school outside the Kau Complex schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary language in home is Marshallese</td>
<td>Speaks English in the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attends Naalehu El. or Kau Middle/High School</td>
<td>Lives in a nuclear family setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>No running water in the home</td>
<td>Enrolled in Kau Complex Schools 100 or less days in 2011-2012 school year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Must live in a clan structure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Must take the school bus as the primary transportation to school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Must have a signed consent form</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Before the school year began, Marshallese community members and Teach For America teachers met to discuss expectations of the upcoming school year and to improve teacher understanding of the community. This was the first time this activity occurred since Teach for America began sending teachers to the Kau Complex.

Assembly of God Deacon announces job opening at Naalehu El. Two parents apply and one gets the job!

Improved Communication!

Building a network around education

Unique Opportunities

Young artist at work. The Learning Coalition will display community created works in their office.

Some Project Offshoots