Akana: Kumu hula fosters Hawaiian language at Waiau

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student's treatment desk, a parental complaint about a sues. He picked up a note from his turn to brass-tacks disciplinary isprincipal, whose attention must

said. "The parent believes the child first...it's very adversarial."
When you're 43 and raised un-"We have come full circle," he

der a completely different set of to take too much of it in person. that this robust vice principal has rules, this can be hard to take. Not "Rarely will a parent come in to

it's my size." "I think I intimidate them. Maybe "he said, and then laughed

went on leave for a semester. days?") when the campus No. 2 wants to be an administrator these principal fill a difficult slot ("Who assignment, one he took to help his The promotion is a temporary

and only Hawaiian is spoken in subjects are taught in Hawaiian mersion education (which in will train him for a new role in im Hawai'i means that all students' He also hopes the experience

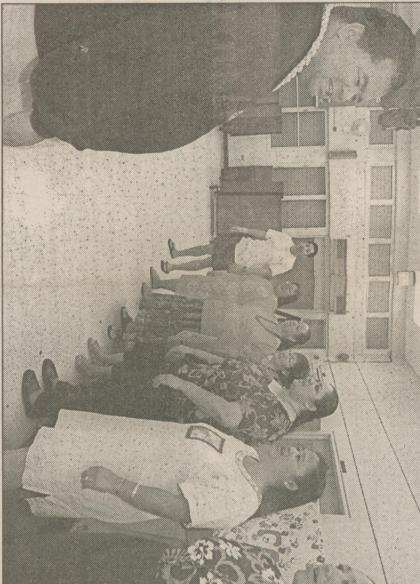
school," he said. ministrator for an immersion And, he said, "I made it very clear was only interested in being an admmersion teacher was found. principal's job once a replacement Akana only accepted the vice-

Teaching hula

continuity of Hawaiian tradition. profit organization centered on the kumu hula and president of a nondancer and chanter, Akana is a After a couple of decades as a the day's remaining hours as well. ture occupies his thoughts most of for his 9-to-5 job, but Hawaiian cul-That about covers his aspirations

delegation as a dancer. vened in New Caledonia in Octoyears. Festival, an event held every four resented Hawai'i at the Pacific Arts ber. It was a kind of homecoming and finance a delegation that repfounded two years ago to organize had joined the first Hawai'i festival for Akana, who 20 years earlier The nonprofit Halau Haloa, was The most recent version con-

out recognition of indigenous copy ods and designs of the Islands have and crafts of Hawai'i. Artistic methwhat has happened with the arts of their heritage, he said: Witness own, giving him a self-identity as have bound him more firmly to his been appropriated by others withtheir consciousness about the value tionhood for Hawaiians has eroded part of the Pacific peoples. Lost na-Those glimpses of other cultures



Students chant for their kumu Kalani Akana in a Hawaiian language class at Waiau Elementary School. Eugene Tanner • The Honolulu Advert

one of the aims of the halau is to such learning opportunities, said see that Hawai'i is a participant in been held elsewhere in the Pacific Akana, who feels especially strong-Workshops on such issues have

the Philippines and Taiwan. Go to Costco. You can buy one for \$900." ly about the property-rights issue. said. "They're being imported from "Take the Hawaiian quilt," he

School of the truly traditional hula pracsaid, is to promote the perpetuation kumu to the next in each hula tices, those dances and chants handed down unchanged from one Another Halau Haloa mission, he

need to pass on. To many people, ... (tradition is) boring." who think if there's a hula you like. said. "There are neotraditionalists "There's not a lot of this kind of hula, not a lot of these teachers," he you do it. There's no tradition you

ardship for Hawaiian legacies. ingly of his efforts to balance conemporary concerns with a stew-Akana's colleagues speak admir

century," said Paulie Jennings, a member of the hālau board of dithe kupuna and tradition, but he's trying to make it work in the 21st "He's trying to include many of

More teachers needed

of cultural perpetuation is language. The youngest child of the Akana believes that at the heart

right and trademark.

ing grandparents, Akana had little time to spend with these elders and missed language instruction from their hands. youngest child of Hawaiian-speak-

> understanding his culture. pursuing hula as his own route to Instead he studied as a teen, first

"It was either going to be hula or canoe paddling," he said with a

chuckle. "I probably should have chosen paddling, because then I'd the concerns the Hawaiian cultural well the young dancer grasped all members being impressed by how dent about Hawaiian chants, retraining under Kaha'i Topolinski, be 200 pounds lighter. now often consults his former stufestival last fall. Topolinksi, who the revival of the language to derenaissance brought to light, from whose hālau Ka Pā Hula Hawai'i oined the delegation to the arts At 19, Akana began formal hula

personality, Topolinski said. "He did not take himself too seri Yet Akana is not a combative bates over political sovereignty

op his work, to come through with what's expected. ously; he took the work seriously, munity. He just continues to devel tractors within the Hawaiian comne said. "He's not swayed by de-"He's very passionate. My kumu

vate them," Topolinski said. who are passionate like I am. told me I will attract only people seeds within him for me to cultihe would have had to have those

guage that has captured his imagischools to offer Hawaiian cultural gram, in which elders come into immersing the children in the laninstruction. But it's the notion of nelping to manage the kupuna pro-Akana began as an educator by

built — Anuenue is bursting at the ond O'ahu immersion high school nation. Akana wants to see a sec-

seams, he said.

trained teachers, he said, and training for the immersion protives to develop accredited teacher Akana has participated in initia-But there's a need for more

classroom. first day at Waiau, he had no come a long way from the days exts, without lesson plans. His when he began teaching without He will admit that Hawai'i has

there now." translating math lessons, preparing something for the kids to read, and called. "Every teacher was like that anything else I could find," he re-We still lack, but they have things "Every night I would stay up

turns to the classroom. do when, starting in the fall, he reenough, from his perspective. There remains plenty for Akana to But things haven't gone far

feel chosen. even more of a calling. I kind of he said. "Hawaiian immersion "They say teaching is a calling,"

thing. erations to say, 'You didn't do anything'." we're going to lose the language," he added. "I don't want future gentake charge now and do our best "It's a calling because if we don"