
KAMP (KINDERGARTNERS ARE MOST PRECIOUS)

Hawaii Parental Information and Resource Center

Parents and Children Together

Honolulu, Hawaii

“Welcome to Pu`ohala!!! We look forward to having your child in our kindergarten class this September!” The organizers of KAMP (Kindergartners Are Most Precious) invited parents and incoming kindergartners to this orientation event designed to ease students’ and families’ transitions to school. KAMP provided parents with an opportunity to meet their children’s teachers, administrators, and school staff; obtain a classroom orientation on classroom procedures and curriculum; learn about a few school procedures; participate in parent-child learning activities; and meet other parents and classmates. In August 2001, twenty-four schools in Hawaii representing fifty-five classes conducted KAMP for 950 kindergartners, 100 siblings, and 1400 parents.

KAMP was designed to support parents to feel comfortable about their children’s school so that they would be involved in their children’s schooling from the very first day. The orientation aimed to relieve the anxiety that parents and children might feel as they transitioned to kindergarten. KAMP created an informal and fun setting for interaction between the family and the school staff to begin the year with a strong foundation.

The 2001 half-day KAMP at one elementary school began with families coloring the welcome banner, drawing pictures, and reading together. The interactive schedule included sessions for orientation between kindergarten teachers and parents, kindergartners-only fun learning activities, parent-child interactive learning, and information on school resources for parents. Parents learned about the school’s vision, the kindergarten curriculum, who to contact for what information, and the many ways that they could be involved with the school. Everyone enjoyed lunch in the cafeteria following KAMP. Similar schedules of activities were conducted by each of the participating elementary schools.

The Hawaii Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC) Coordinator called together the KAMP planning and implementation team before the end of the prior school year to organize preparations. The school principal and kindergarten teachers took primary responsibility for designing KAMP, and then shared responsibility for implementation with school support staff (cafeteria manager, head custodian, after-school care coordinator, health aide, Parent

Community Networking Center coordinator), librarian, counselor, PTA President, and other staff and volunteers. The PIRC Coordinator assumed responsibility for managing the schedule of preparations and making sure that all team members met task deadlines.

KAMP expenses depended on the lunch that was provided and the number of people who attended the event. The PIRC budget provided funding as needed. The school cafeteria prepared the lunch—usually rice and chili and orange slices. Materials for the parent-child activities were borrowed from the Cooperative Extension Service.

To enhance the implementation of KAMP for the coming school year, a how-to handbook will be available for each school conducting KAMP. Also, volunteer training will be held before KAMP to help make the day run smoother.

Schools conducting KAMP have observed clear benefits for students, families, and the school. Most importantly, kindergarteners are happy to come to school on the first day. They are greeted by familiar faces, and they have some idea of what to expect at school. In most cases, there is no longer any separation anxiety for either parents or children. KAMP has helped ease the transition to kindergarten, and has begun a positive partnership between families and the school.

Cynthia Okazaki, State Coordinator
(808) 235-7747