

Field research opportunities for science, math teachers

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MEDIA RELEASE

The Hawaii Island Meaningful Outdoor Experience for Students (HI-MOES) program encourages middle and high school science and mathematics teachers to apply for field research opportunities for the 2012-2013 school year.

Administered by The Kohala Center and in association with the Kohala Watershed Partnership, HI-MOES empowers eligible teachers with critical resources to conduct place-based education — such as classroom mini-grants, transportation and logistical support — they or their schools are likely to need.

HI-MOES is funded by a grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Program.



With a focus on bay and watershed education, HI-MOES provides place-based learning opportunities to middle and high school students via hands-on field research.

Four diverse ahupuaa (traditional land divisions) on Hawaii Island serve as “classrooms”: Kohala Mountain, Kahaluu Bay (Kona), Kaupulehu (North Kona), and Hilo Bay Watershed.

An outdoor educator from The Kohala Center or the Kohala Watershed Partnership provides technical, logistical, and programmatic support to classroom teachers throughout the year. The program meets Hawaii Department of Education content and performance standards.

“Many students in Hawaii say they’ve only been on one field trip during their education,” said Erica Perez, expeditionary learning coordinator at The Kohala Center. “When you consider how much planning and organization goes into field trips — transportation, supervision, insurance, and safety, for example — they can become financially and logistically prohibitive for teachers. HI-MOES provides that critical support, so that teachers are able to give their students expanded, real-world learning opportunities.”

Charlotte Godfrey-Romo, a teacher at Hilo High School, participated in the program last year. She teaches three Plants and Animals of Hawaii classes to juniors and seniors.

Last year, her classes made several trips to Kapoho to assess the health of several coral species. Information from local residents and research seemed to indicate that the septic systems of nearby houses were leaking into the water table, possibly polluting the reefs and proliferating disease.

“HI-MOES found a specialist for my class to help prepare them for their research projects,” Godfrey-Romo said. “The digital cameras, tape measures, and quadrat supplies being used were purchased with a HI-MOES mini-grant and will serve future classes for years to come. The program also arranged and paid for transportation, which is usually the biggest barrier in getting students out into the field for research. The financial and classroom support encouraged and enabled me to be able to provide a high-quality, hands-on learning experience that will enrich students’ learning experiences.”

Other research projects conducted through HI-MOES in years past include comparing water quality parameters in different locations over time, calculating and comparing the amount of marine debris in near-shore areas, assessing risks in coastal hazard/tsunami evacuation zones, comparing nutrient input to algal cover on coral reefs, and measuring and comparing species in local ecosystems such as reefs, tide pools, or forests.

“Place-based education gets students out of classrooms and into meaningful, hands-on outdoor research experiences,” Perez said. “In addition, the program builds a longer-term impact by exposing students to potential career paths, in hopes of inspiring academic excellence and motivating them to pursue higher education.”

“I’ve had 100 percent positive feedback from students about the field experience opportunity,” Godfrey-Romo said. “My students all concur they will get more out field experience than from learning from a textbook. This experience will add to their constructed knowledge for their future classes and life experiences, and hopefully inspire them for future jobs out in the field.”

Educators who have been through the program are welcome to re-apply. Interested teachers can find more information about HI-MOES, eligibility requirements, and an online application at www.kohalacenter.org/himoes/ab..., or may call The Kohala Center at (808) 887-6411.

The deadline to apply is Aug. 31.

The Kohala Center is an independent, community-based center for research, education and conservation. The Center was established in direct response to the request of island residents to create greater educational and employment opportunities by enhancing — and celebrating — Hawaii’s spectacular natural and cultural landscapes.

— Find out more:
www.kohalacenter.org

Photo Credits: Innovations Public Charter School students Sahara Iverson (left) and Naia Hemsher study marine species in an intertidal zone. (Photo courtesy of The Kohala Center)