

A fair for All Kinds of Minds

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Special to NHN

Last Thursday, more than 215 parents, teachers and students turned out at Kohala Elementary School (KES) for the second annual All Kinds of Minds (AKOM) fair.

The event was a partnership between the school and the Hawaii Resources for School Success (HRSS).

HRSS is the flagship program of North Hawaii Women and Children's Services (NHWCS), a Waimea-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1997, whose vision is to ensure that "Hawaii students and families have access to research-based education practices" and whose mission is to "help and empower diverse learners in school and life."

HRSS first partnered with KES in August 2007, to train the school's teachers in the

national, evidence-based Schools Attuned Teacher Professional Development model. This model, from the All Kinds of Minds Institute, focuses on increasing student success via early identification of and effective intervention for capable students who struggle in school.

"The second annual fair was hands-on, parent, adult, and student-community friendly. The stations were well manned. I totally learned and enjoyed discovering," said RoseMae Watterson, KES counselor.

The purpose of the fair was to introduce parents and caregivers to the AKOM Schools Attuned culture put to work in individual classrooms, and especially to the neurodevelopmental framework that is the basis of the AKOM philosophy of learning. The term neurodevelopmental refers to the development of neurological pathways in the

brain and the idea that each person's brain develops and learns in its own unique way.

There are eight neurodevelopmental constructs in the AKOM model: attention, temporal-sequential ordering, spatial ordering, memory, language, neuromotor function, social cognition, and higher order cognition.

Among these, every learner has strengths and weaknesses as well as specific affinities (things he or she greatly enjoys). When a student, and his or her parents and teacher can understand where the student's strengths and weaknesses lie, and how the child learns best, then appropriate action can take place in the classroom and at home to help that student succeed.

The attendees visited stations at the fair where they participated in interactive learning activities that

demonstrated the different neurodevelopmental constructs. By exploring and understanding their own neurodevelopmental profiles, parents could relate to their child's strengths and challenges in learning.

"The turnout and the interaction by parents and students gave parents a great opportunity to see elements of the program in action. We really enjoyed the evening," said Marty Sunderland, KES third grade teacher.

Parents also received "toolkits" which were filled with information about understanding and encouraging their children's learning abilities, how to help with homework, how to communicate effectively with teachers, and how to talk to their kids about their learning process.

At the fair, KES was recognized as an All Kinds of Minds School

of Distinction, one of only 10 such schools in the nation. According to the AKOM website, Schools of Distinction "demonstrate a desire to implement the principles, content, and processes of All Kinds of Minds programs. These organizations have embraced the philosophies of All Kinds of Minds and have made significant progress toward their goal of integrating our programs..."

Schools of Distinction must have been implementing the programs for at least one year and have had at least 50 percent of their educators complete 35 hours of training, and "in addition to showing a strong commitment to understanding differences in learning and helping struggling

students achieve success in the classroom, are strong advocates for learning diversity and acceptance."

HRSS representatives were grateful to Sweet Scoops in Kapaau which donated five gift certificates for a drawing at the event and especially for funding from its donors — the Atherton Family Foundation, Cooke Foundation, and the GN Wilcox Trust.

HRSS program director Beth Custer said, "We're pleased to be partnering with KES, in helping teachers and parents better understand how to support all students' learning."

For more information about HRSS and/or KES, please visit www.hawaiischoolsuccess.org or call 885-9318.