

Ocean Sciences Meeting Provides Window into Science Profession for Eighth Grade Students

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A team from Kapolei Middle School composed of 8th grade students Gazerelle Acain, Aeka Lauderdale, and myself, a 7th grade Life science teacher, accepted an invitation from the Center for Microbial Oceanography: Research and Education to the Ocean Sciences Meeting in Honolulu to share about the amazing marine biology educational outreach programs that have so excited our students during our 4th quarter Ecology studies. The abstract for our presentation follows:

Scientific Community Educational Partnerships Provide Middle Students Opportunities, Tools, and Strategies to Explore Local Marine Ecology

Through creative educational outreach, the Hawai‘i scientific community has delivered tools, strategies, and well-crafted resources and to public school teachers and students. These resources allow students to give ocean ecology a fitting focus, which is rarely afforded in middle school science. Kapolei Middle School students used resources from the Center for Microbial Oceanography: Research and Education (C-MORE), Pacific American Foundation (PAF), and the Hawai‘i Institute of Marine Biology (HIMB) to explore ecology concepts in the local marine environments. C-MORE’s Plankton kit introduced students to basic ecological through hands-on activities. C-MORE’s Microscope program allowed classroom sharing of individual students discoveries on a flat screen and, globally, through Project Noah. With the research question “Does zooplankton sample composition differ on different days along a transect in Kāne‘ohe Bay?”, our students use PAF’s Project Aloha ‘Aina to learn about Kāne‘ohe’s reef community and human impacts. HIMB’s “Expedition to Moku o Lo‘e” guided students in gathering Kāne‘ohe Bay plankton and measuring the water’s physical characteristics. Data analysis stimulated new research questions and increased scientific interest among the students.

At the beginning of our presentation featuring photos of students experiencing each marine biology outreach component, Gazerelle Acain gave a two-minute testimonial recounting the high degree of intrigue she discovered in these programs. Both she and Aeka found opportunities to engage in conversation with scientists before and after the presentation. As part of these conversations, learning about current doctoral studies from the candidates themselves was a highlight for us all.

We thank everyone at the Center for Microbial Oceanography: Research and Education for including us in your inspiring work. I hope our students will find their way to be engaged in such important research and education.