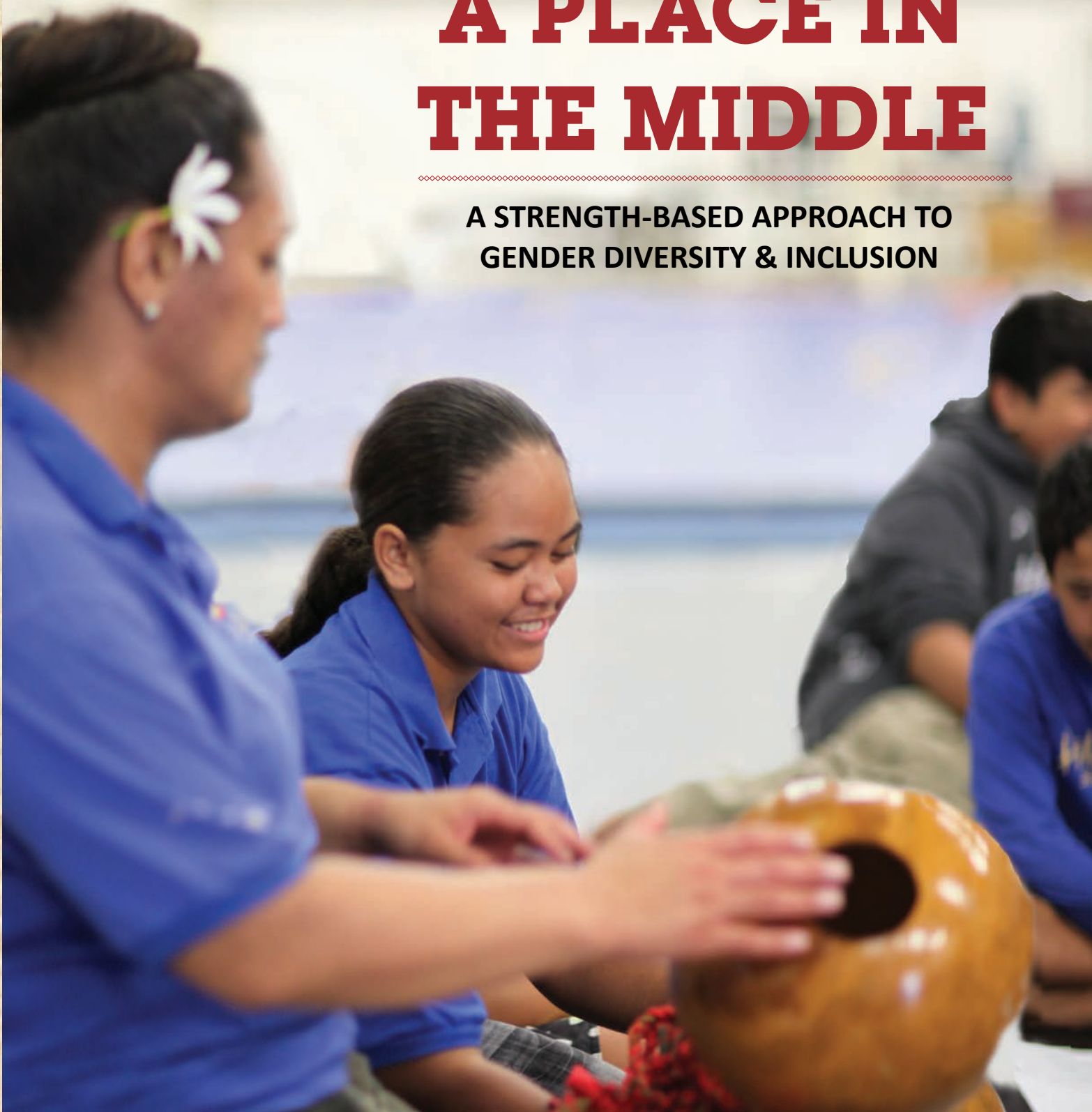


# A PLACE IN THE MIDDLE

A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH TO  
GENDER DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



Discussion and Activity Guide

[APlaceintheMiddle.org](http://APlaceintheMiddle.org)



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## 'ANO'AI KE ALOHA!

**I mau ka 'ike kupuna o ke au I hala iā kākou nā hanauana o ke au nei.** (*May the ancestral understandings of the past live on through the practices of the present generation.*)

Mahalo to each and every one of you who have become part of the social change effort represented by *A Place in the Middle*. I hope that it will help you find the confidence, strength, determination, and fortitude to do what you need to do, whether simply to be yourself and live your truths, or to create an opportunity for empowerment and acceptance for someone who is without, just as my family did for me. My grandmothers, my mother and father, and others in my family empowered me to identify by culture first. In doing so, I've found a very distinct and honorable place in which to exist. I'm very grateful for the lessons I've acquired from all my mentors, teachers, and role models and am even more excited that these insights and lessons are able to live on via this film through you. The cultural empowerment that I hope you experience is a part of the collective wisdom my family and mentors imparted upon me, and now I leave it with you to give you confidence and strength for the paths and journey ahead.

**Hinaleimoana Kwai Kong Wong-Kalu**  
*Story Creator*

Thank you so much for bringing *A Place in the Middle* into your classroom. We are honored and grateful that Ho'onani and her teacher Kumu Hina allowed us to document their story and share it with you.

With your guidance, the film can help your students appreciate the value of inclusion, the strengths they inherit from their cultural heritage, and their own power to create a school climate of respect and honor for all. The film models these values by showcasing an extraordinary school in Hawai'i that empowers its students by reclaiming important aspects of native traditions historically suppressed by colonial powers, including the traditional respect for gender diversity and *māhū*. When students see that every aspect of who they are is cherished, energy blooms and bullying withers. We hope *A Place in the Middle* will similarly open hearts and minds in your school, classroom or community.

**Dean Hamer and Joe Wilson**  
*Filmmakers*



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### HAWAII IS

Hawai'i is the most isolated island chain in the world and one of the last spots to be inhabited by humans. Early settlements were from the Marquesas Islands around 900 C.E. or earlier, and later settlements came from Tahiti. There was back-and-forth exchange with Tahiti and other Pacific islands for several hundred years, but by the 1400s those great voyages stopped and there was no more interchange with other Pacific societies.

# ABOUT THE FILM

## SYNOPSIS

*A Place in the Middle* is the true story of Ho'onani, a remarkable eleven year old girl who dreams of leading the hula troupe at her inner-city Honolulu school. The only trouble is that the group is just for boys. She's fortunate that her teacher understands first-hand what it's like to be "in the middle" - the Native Hawaiian tradition of embracing both male and female spirit. As student and teacher prepare for a climactic end-of-year performance, together they set out to prove that what matters most is what's inside a person's heart and mind.

## AVAILABILITY

The complete film (runtime 24:41) and several shorter clips can be streamed or downloaded for no cost either from the [Project Website](http://APlaceintheMiddle.org) (<http://APlaceintheMiddle.org>), [Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/aplaceinthemiddle) (<https://vimeo.com/aplaceinthemiddle>), or from [PBS LearningMedia](http://goo.gl/GKKrHk) (<http://goo.gl/GKKrHk>). DVD copies can be obtained through the project website.

# FEATURED CHARACTERS



**Kumu Hina**  
(Hinaleimoana Wong-Kalu)

Ho'onani's mentor and Hawaiian cultural expert who transitioned from kāne to mähū wahine many years ago.



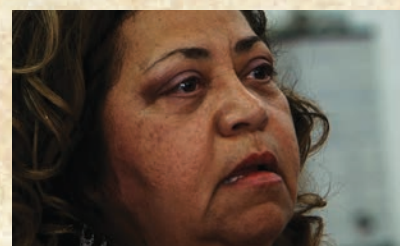
**Ho'onani Kamai**

Sixth grade student who is "in the middle" between kāne and wahine and wants to lead the high school kāne hula group.



**Jozie Kamai**

Ho'onani's mother



**Principal Laara**

School Principal

## HAWAI'I IS

Though contact with foreign ships may have occurred more than a century earlier, the first recorded foreign visit was in 1778 when Captain James Cook landed on Kaua'i. He found a thriving civilization with its own government, language, culture and self-sustaining economy. Cook's exploration of the Pacific introduced Hawai'i to the world, opening a new era of continual foreign contact.

Even after 40 years of foreign interaction and after quitting their old religion, Hawaiians still had a strong culture when American missionaries came in 1820. The missionaries thought many parts of Hawaiian culture were offensive and preached against everything they didn't like. Over time, the Christianity they introduced was adopted by many Hawaiians, including the king and chiefs, who made serious changes. Some cultural practices were forbidden by law, while others were thought of as ignorant, old-fashioned or even disgusting. Christianity changed Hawaiian society and the way that many Hawaiians viewed their culture and heritage.



## HAWAII IS

In 250 years of continual interaction with the outside world, constant change reshaped the land and people of Hawai'i. New governments and economies came about, along with waves of different cultures brought by those coming to the islands. Populations from America, Europe, Japan, China, Portugal, the Philippines and more each brought new languages, beliefs, religions and cultural norms, creating a social setting and cultural mixture unique to these islands.

The 1970s, a period referred to as the "Hawaiian Renaissance," began a revival of Hawaiian language, canoe traditions, music and dance, along with renewed interest in Hawaiian history, sovereignty and traditional Hawaiian practices, but many aspects of older Hawaiian culture remained obscure. *A Place in the Middle* is part of the continuing revival and growth of awareness of Kanaka Maoli traditions that are still relevant today.

Source: Professor Puakea Nogelmeier, Hawai'inuiaākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge, University of Hawai'i.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

### TARGET AUDIENCE

This guide is designed for screenings of *A Place in the Middle* with students in grades 4-12, teachers, parents and community members. Its resources are appropriate for formal classrooms, club activities, libraries and community meetings. There is also a special section dedicated to using the film for professional development workshops or professional learning communities.

### LEARNING GOALS

The specific lessons that students take away from a screening of *A Place in the Middle* will depend, in large part, on your choices for follow-up and the example you set. In general, by viewing the film and participating in a guided discussion or activity, students will practice speaking and listening skills as they engage in meaningful conversations about:

- The power that comes from understanding one's own culture and respecting the cultures of others
- Native Hawaiian polyculturalism as a model for a diverse world
- The benefits of diversity to individuals, schools, and the broader community
- Native Hawaiian approaches to gender, diversity and inclusion
- The value of becoming more comfortable with and connected to all types of people, including those who are different from you
- Creating safe space for individuals to be themselves fully
- The Hawaiian concept of māhū and how it relates to being "in the middle" in other cultures
- The ways in which our beliefs about what it means to be male, female, or "in the middle" are shaped by our culture
- Colonial attempts to suppress Native Hawaiian culture, contemporary attempts at revival and preservation, and the benefits of reclaiming one's heritage
- The multiple meanings of *aloha* and how they apply to school and learning

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

*A Place in the Middle* demonstrates the power of indigenous culture to shape identity, personal agency, and community cohesion – from a young person's point of view. That lens makes the film a great teaching tool. It brings into focus the challenges and benefits of living in a diverse world, as it inspires viewers to explore the true meaning of *aloha* – love, honor and respect for all.

By addressing current issues such as bullying and gender identity from a Polynesian perspective that is little known outside the Pacific Islands, the film challenges students to think critically and strategically. As such, this guide can help students meet key learning goals codified within various learning standards detailed at the end of this guide. These include Nā Hopena A'ō (Hā), a series of learning outcomes rooted in Native Hawaiian educational philosophy; the Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy, which have been adopted by the majority of states in the USA and the performance outcomes described in the Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action domains of the Teaching Tolerance Anti-bias Framework, a set of standards that provide a common language and organizational structure teachers can use to set and assess anti-bias teaching goals such as prejudice reduction, collective action and social emotional skills.

# DISCUSSION PROMPTS & ACTIVITY IDEAS

This guide is designed for a wide range of circumstances, so you'll want to select the questions and activities that best match your goals and your students' needs. Typically you'll only need a few prompts to get a discussion flowing. Once students are engaged, follow their lead. You might also consider using some of the questions as writing prompts.



## BEFORE AND AFTER VIEWING

A short exercise to warm-up before watching the film, gauge students' familiarity with Hawaiian culture, and assess how much is learned by watching the program.

1. Show students this picture of three characters from the animated history section of the film. (You can project or print the picture from the separate page at the back of this guide). Ask:
  - What is the picture showing?
  - Who are the characters in the picture and what do you know about them? *Tip: If students have trouble coming up with an answer, you might ask, "What clothes are they wearing?" The malo (loincloth) signals male and the pā'ū (skirt) signals female.*
  - Do you think this an historical or modern-day / depiction? Why?
  - Do you think the message is positive, negative, or something else?
2. Tell students that the picture will appear in the film they are about to view. They should watch for it and listen for information that explains its meaning.
3. After viewing, show the picture again and ask students to explain it. Answers should include: From left to right, the image depicts a kāne (male), māhū (person who embraces both masculine and feminine traits), and wahine (female).
4. Together, look again at the questions you asked prior to viewing and again, ask students to answer them. Compare their post-viewing responses with their pre-viewing responses and invite them to explain any differences.

Make note of the responses so students can compare them to their post-viewing answers.

## TERMS TO REMEMBER

### HAWAIIAN TERMS

**Aloha** – Love, honor and respect; hello, goodbye

**Hae Hawai'i** - Flag of Hawai'i

**Hālau** – school; literally: a branch from which many leaves grow

**Hana Hou** - Repeat; do it again; encore

**Hawai'i Pono ʻī** - Former national anthem of Hawai'i; "Hawai'i's own"

**Huki** - Pull

**Kanaka Maoli** - Native Hawaiian

**Kāne** - Man, boy, masculine

**Kāne-Wahine / Wahine-Kāne** - Terms coined by Hina to mean girl-boys and boy-girls

**Kū** - Male energy; Hawaiian god of war

**Kumu** - Teacher; foundation, basis; root, tree trunk

**Lokahi** – connections; connectedness; in the film, the name of the school

**Māhū** - People with both feminine and masculine traits; hermaphrodite; gay

**Na'au** - Small intestines, gut; the seat of emotions or "Hawaiian heart"

**No'ono'o** - Mind, thoughts

**Pualu** - Assembly; to work together

**Wahine** - Woman, girl, feminine



## CONVERSATION STARTERS

Introductory questions to get students involved in the discussion.

1. If you were going to tell a friend about this film, what would you say?
2. Did anything in the film surprise you? How so?
3. Describe a moment in the film that inspired, confused, or “spoke truth” to you. What was it about the scene that was especially memorable?
4. What single word best describes how the film made you feel? What made you feel that way?
5. What is one thing you learned from the film? What else do you want to know?

### GENDER-RELATED TERMINOLOGY

**Gay** - Describes a person whose emotional, romantic and sexual attractions are primarily for individuals of the same sex, typically in reference to men and boys, sometimes used as a general term for gay men and lesbians.

**Gender** – The set of behaviors and activities that are culturally identified as “masculine” or “feminine.” These include clothing, hairstyles, body language, occupations or hobbies, etc.

**LGBT** - An acronym, which stands for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender.”

**Lesbian** - A woman or girl whose emotional, romantic and sexual attractions are primarily for other women or girls.

**Sex** – The biological characteristics that identify a person as male, female, or intersex (people born with physical features that are neither clearly male nor female or are a combination of female and male).

**Transgender** - An umbrella term (sometimes shortened to “trans”) that describes people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender people may or may not choose to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically.



## IDENTITIES

Questions to help students examine the multifaceted and evolving nature of identity

1. What is the meaning of the film's title?
2. Make a list of all the facets of Ho'onani's identity that you see in the film. Then make a list of the significant facets of your identity. How do the things on your list compare to Ho'onani's?  
ADVANCED: If you represented each facet of your identity with a circle, would some be larger than others? Do some circles overlap? What did you learn from the film about the ways in which facets of identities intersect?
3. Ho'onani is "in the middle" between *kāne* and *wahine*. How many other ways can you think of that people find themselves "in the middle;" e.g., being more than one race or bilingual, being part of two households after a divorce, etc.?
4. The film explains that, "In the Hawaiian language, *kāne* means male and *wahine* means female. But ancient Hawaiians recognized that some people are not simply one or the other." What's the difference between being "male" and being "masculine" and between being "female" and being "feminine?" What traits or activities can you think of that are both masculine and feminine?  
ADVANCED: A common misconception is to equate sex (male and female) with gender (masculine and feminine). How do the stories of Ho'onani and Kumu Hina demonstrate the difference between sex and gender?
5. Kumu Hina tells the boys that even though Ho'onani is a biological female, "she has more *kū* than everybody else around here." And the boys seem to agree. How could a girl have more *kū* than the boys? What did she do that displayed *kū* that the boys did not display?
6. Ho'onani says that people sometimes mistake her for a boy "And then they give me a look. But it's all a natural thing...What middle means is, a rare person." How does using the word "rare" instead of "different" change the way you think about people like Ho'onani?  
ADVANCED: How would you respond to someone who challenged Ho'onani's assertion that being "in the middle" is "*natural*" for her?
7. Kumu Hina and her school teach that Native Hawaiian culture is one in which identity is fluid, and where every place on the continuum is valued. What would change in your life if everyone adopted this model? What would change in your community?
8. Would you describe anyone in the film as a hero or a role model? Who merits that label and what did they do to earn it?

### "IN THE MIDDLE" IN OTHER CULTURES

For all of recorded history, thriving cultures throughout Polynesia and all around the world have recognized, revered and integrated individuals who were not exclusively male or female and established traditions for third, fourth, fifth or more genders. A few examples are described below, and many more can be found on the Map of Gender-Diverse Cultures on page 10, as well as on-line:

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/two-spirits/map.html>

### TWO-SPIRITS

The first nation peoples of the American Plains, Great Lakes, Southwest, and California had a culture of respecting and valuing people they called "two-spirit." These individuals embodied both masculine and feminine traits, merging the roles rather than taking on the opposite gender role typically assigned to their sex. Seen by others as rare and important, they functioned as healers, conveyors of oral traditions, religious and judicial leaders, and matchmakers.





#### FAKALEITI

Tonga's third gender, *fakaleiti*, translates to "like a woman," and refers to biological males who dress as women and carry out tasks that are customarily done by females. *Fakaleiti* is a gender identity, but not necessarily a sexual identity. Because they take on the identity of a traditional woman, many choose to partner with "straight" men, though there are also *fakaleiti* who do not sleep with men. The visibility of *fakaleiti* was traditionally very prevalent, and it was quite common for families to have at least one *fakaleiti* individual, even assigning the role to a child in families with multiple sons and no daughters. Today, *fakaleiti* still hold a positive reputation in Tonga and are respected for their creativity and hard work.

#### FA'AFAFINE

Samoa's social acceptance of *fa'afafine* has evolved from the tradition of raising some boys as girls. Like Tonga's *fakaleiti*, these boys were not necessarily gay, or noticeably effeminate, but were brought up as *fa'afafine* because they were born into families that had too many boys and not enough girls to carry out gender-segregated chores. Modern *fa'afafine* most often choose the role for themselves and tend to identify as a third sex rather than gay or straight.

## INCLUSION

Questions that help students understand how everyone benefits when people take pride in who they are without denying the dignity of others.

1. Ho'onani wants to dance as part of the boys' hula troupe. Do you think girls should be allowed to do everything that boys do? Explain your reasoning.  
ADVANCED: In your view, would it ever be adequate to create a "separate but equal" solution in instances where girls want to participate in activities traditionally reserved for boys or vice versa?
2. Ho'onani is different from her classmates because she wants to be able to do what the boys do, and without giving up doing what she does as a girl. What sorts of differences set you apart from your classmates? In what ways are you and your classmates alike? Do you prefer that your classmates focus on what makes you different or what you have in common? What do Ho'onani's classmates do?
3. Have you ever been told you can't do something because "that's for boys (or that's for girls)?" Or if you're a boy, have you been told to "toughen up," or if you're a girl, to "act more like a lady?" How did those comments make you feel? Does Ho'onani's example offer any help?
4. Ho'onani says that some people don't accept her being in the middle, and "they tease about it. But I don't care. Because I'm myself, other people are themselves." Do you believe that she really doesn't care? Have you ever been teased because you didn't go along with someone else's idea of what you were supposed to do (or like or think)? Have you ever witnessed that type of teasing? What was it like for you?
5. Describe things that each of these people or groups do or say that empower Ho'onani:
  - Her classmates - the girls? the boys?
  - Her mother?
  - Kumu Hina?
  - The school principal?
6. How does it benefit the other students to see peers, teachers, and community members accept Ho'onani for who she is and support her quest for authentic self-expression?
7. Would you say that Ho'onani – or anyone else in the film – displays courage? What things did they do that might be considered courageous? In what ways does the culture of the school give them the strength to do those things?
8. Kumu Hina tells Ho'onani, "Sometimes I feel like I might be setting you up for some disappointment. I know that you like to go stand with all the boys and I know that's where you like to go. Kumu's okay with that. But when you work with other people, they may expect you to stand in the girls' line, okay? So, for as long as you stay a young person, you just roll with it, you know?" Should Hina do more to prepare Ho'onani for the "real world" that might not accept her as she is? If you were Hina, what advice would you give to Ho'onani? What could you do to make Hina's warning irrelevant, i.e., to change the "real world" so it would accept Ho'onani just as she is?



## THE POWER OF HERITAGE

Questions that challenge students to explore the ways in which connections to a collective history and culture shapes their lives.

1. What do you know now about Hawai'i that you didn't know before watching the film?
2. The school that Ho'onani attends is trying to keep ancient Hawaiian traditions alive. Why do you suppose that Ho'onani's mother wants her children to study hula and Hawaiian culture, even though she never did?  
 ADVANCED: Which cultural traditions are important in your home? Which of these are also important in your neighborhood, the broader community, and your country? What advantages accrue to a person who shares the dominant culture compared with someone who does not typically see their heritage reflected in their environment?
3. Ho'onani's mother thinks that the school's focus on Hawaiian culture gives students confidence. Why do you think that might be? How did their Native culture give Kumu Hina and Ho'onani the confidence and space to be themselves?  
 ADVANCED: What is it about Native Hawaiian culture (as compared with today's dominant Western influences) that empowers the teachers and students in the film? Can

you think of other places in the world where this model of reclaiming suppressed cultural identities would benefit (or is benefitting) communities?

4. Kumu Hina explains, "Before the coming of foreigners to our islands, we Hawaiians lived in aloha – in harmony with the land and with one another. Every person had their role in society, whether male, female, or *māhū*, those who embrace both the feminine and masculine traits that are embodied within each and every one of us. *Māhū* were valued and respected as caretakers, healers, and teachers of ancient traditions." How does this compare with what you have learned from your culture about gender roles? Where do your ideas about "proper" gender behavior come from?  
 ADVANCED: Hawai'i is not the only place or culture that accepted or assigned important roles to individuals who were not exclusively male or female. Research, compare, and contrast the *māhū* with accepted gender identities in other cultures. (See Background Section on pages 3 - 8 for starting places) What do the cultures that honor "in the middle" individuals have in common? If people who are *māhū* have been present in nearly all cultures and times, why has Western civilization been so adamant that only two gender roles are acceptable?

### "IN THE MIDDLE" IN OTHER CULTURES

#### HIJRA

*Hijras* have been part of South Asia's diverse cultures for thousands of years. Historically the term has been used to describe anyone whose physiology or behavior didn't neatly fit into male or female, from those who were gay or transgender to cross-dressers and eunuchs. Some South Asian societies celebrated *hijras* as members of a sacred caste with important spiritual functions, while others marginalized them as prostitutes and undesirables. When the British came to power in India they declared all *hijras* as criminals, but as India rejected colonialism and re-asserted control over its own culture, their status has been reconsidered. In April, 2014, India's Supreme Court recognized as a matter of law *hijra* and transgender people as a third gender.



5. Ho'onani is learning about her Hawaiian heritage at school. Where do you learn about your family's culture? What role do students' home cultures play in your school? What role do you think they should play?

ADVANCED: What are the advantages and drawbacks of these approaches to students' cultures: 1) expecting assimilation; 2) acculturation, i.e., accommodating some aspects of students' home cultures; 3) culture-centric (like the school in the film)?

6. Kumu Hina says that when she was tormented in high school, she "found refuge in being Hawaiian..." How does the school's commitment to honor and preserve students' indigenous culture make it possible for students and teachers to express their authentic selves? How did it open up the opportunity for Ho'onani to join the boys' hula troupe? How did her joining the troupe benefit the boys? How did it benefit the school?

ADVANCED: In terms of honoring or integrating students' home cultures, what does your school do well and what could it do better?

7. Principal Laara urges her students to take seriously their lessons on Hawaiian culture because, "We didn't get to sing [the Hawaiian national anthem] in our schools. We had to pledge allegiance to the flag that took over Hawai'i." Why is it important to her to share these memories and why would it be important for the students to know this history?

ADVANCED: What is the cost to society – colonizers as well as colonized - of the kind of forced assimilation that Principal Laara describes?

8. Kumu Hina explains that, "When American missionaries arrived in the 1800s, they were shocked and infuriated by practices [and traditions like the *māhū*] and did everything they could to abolish them. They condemned our hula and chant as immoral. They outlawed our language, and they imposed their religious strictures across our lands." Do you know of other similar instances of forced assimilation? What factors determine which things change and which are left intact? Why is it important for people like Hina to reclaim and preserve their heritage instead of letting it go?

ADVANCED: How is suppression of indigenous culture tied to other forms of control (e.g., economic exploitation of resources, strategic military control)?

9. Kumu Hina challenges her students: "If I put you in a position of leadership, your eye has to see what I see. Your ears have to hear what I hear. You've got to be able to talk to your people." How does your school or community define leadership? What qualities do you want in a leader? What does Ho'onani do that makes her a good leader? Who are the leaders in your school?

ADVANCED: Compare and contrast the concept of leadership in the film with forms of leadership in your community (at school, in government, business, sports, civic groups, etc.). What do you notice about the similarities and differences?





## SCHOOL CLIMATE

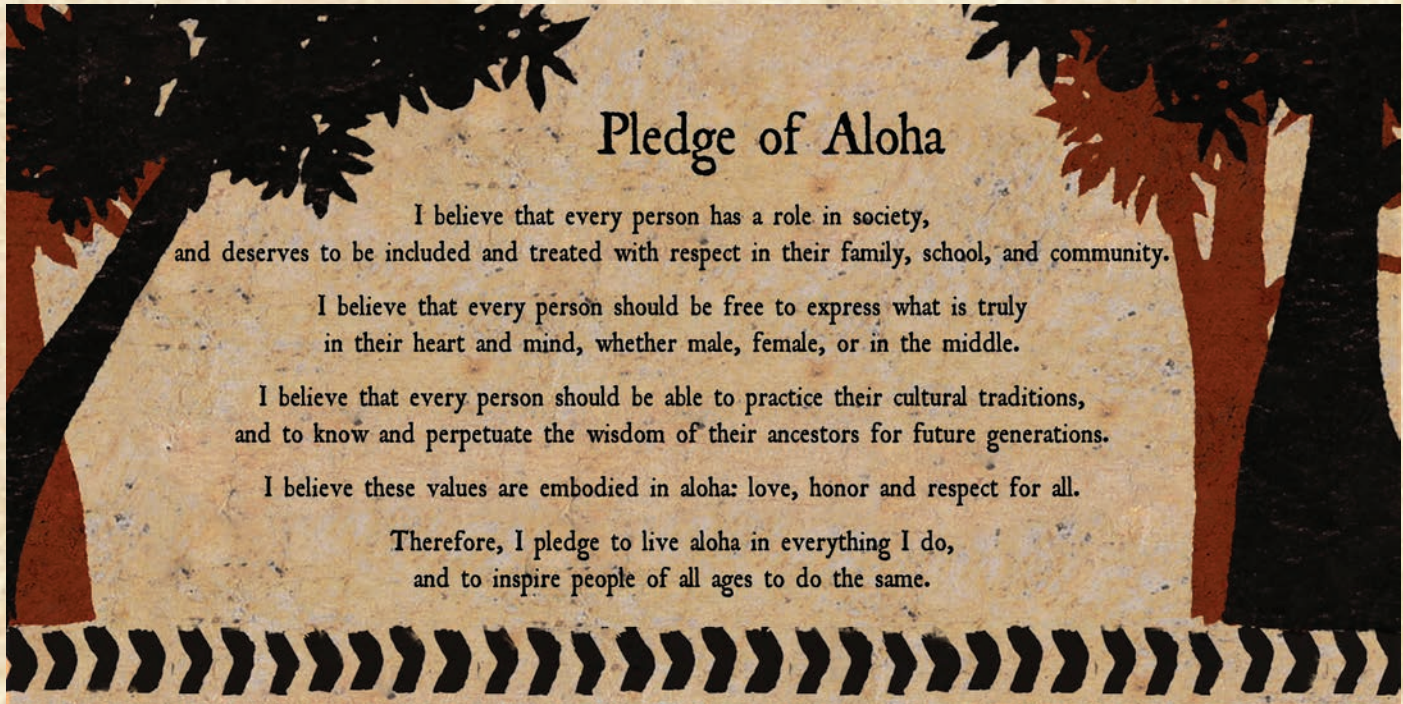
Questions to help students envision a school community that accepts and appreciates diversity and acknowledge their power to create that community

1. What are some of the similarities and differences between your school and the school in the film? What do students in your school have in common with the students featured in the film? What's different?
2. Ho'onani's classmates say it's "no big deal" that she's "a mixture of a girl and a boy." How would Ho'onani be treated if she were in your school? If she moved to your town, what could you do to make her feel welcome?
3. Kumu Hina says, "When I was in high school, I had a very rough time. I was teased and tormented for being too girlish." Has anyone in your school had a similar experience? What did you do? What do you wish you had done? What do you think the person being teased would have wanted you to do?
4. What do you think it would be like to have someone like Kumu Hina as your teacher?
5. Kumu Hina says, "I want every student to know that if you are my student, you have a place to be - in the middle." What difference does it make for Ho'onani to have a teacher who understands and shares the experience, and also declares support for being in the middle?
6. Kumu Hina says, the true meaning of *aloha* is "love, honor and respect." How do the students and teachers at the school in the film demonstrate aloha? How do you (or could you) demonstrate it at your school? How about outside of school?
7. How does the concept of *aloha* apply to a problem like cyberbullying? What could you do to increase the amount of honor and respect that people at your school show one another?
8. Based on what you saw in the film, if there was one change you could make at your school, what would it be? What actions could you take to help make that change happen?

# TRANSLATING KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION

What is one lesson you learned from the film that you wish everyone in your family, school, or community knew? What do you think would change if everyone knew it? What could you do to help others learn what you learned?

Invite students, staff, and parents to sign a “Pledge of Aloha” (a copy can be printed from the jpeg at the back of this guide, or signed online at <http://aplaceinthemiddle.org/pledge-of-aloha>).



Consider holding an open house or community gathering with all school stakeholders working together in small groups. Take each statement and brainstorm ways to translate the belief into specific actions. End the meeting by reviewing the full list of actions. Invite participants to choose one or two of the actions that they commit to implementing in the coming week (or month). Check back at the next gathering and ask people to share what it was like to take the actions they chose.

Investigate your school district’s policies regarding the rights of all students to be their true selves, using what you learned about how Ho’onani’s school supported her to assess the efficacy of the policy and, if needed, to offer advice on ways to strengthen or improve it. For background on how one specific example – the rights of transgender students – plays out in education settings, you might look at one of the following sites: <https://www.aclu.org/lgbt-rights/know-your-rights-transgender-people-and-law> , <http://transgenderlaw.org> and <http://www.campuspride.org/tpc/>

Use International Transgender Day of Visibility (March 31) or National Coming Out Day (October 11), as an opportunity to share positive examples of people who challenge the limits of gender conformity. Invite students to develop presentations about the insights they gained from viewing and discussing *A Place in the Middle*. Use the presentations as a way of assessing what students learned.

Research the Hawaiian Islands' history and indigenous culture and compare what you learn to what your school district currently teaches about Hawai’i, including what’s in library and text books. Recommend revisions where needed.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Questions to help faculty, staff, and administrators think more deeply about school policy and what they can do in their own practice to create an environment in which all students can succeed.

1. Ho'onani's school is designed to instill in its students a commitment to act in the true spirit of *aloha*, i.e., love, honor and respect for everyone. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your own school on living up to that standard? What could it (or you) do better?

2. If it's true that children learn as much from their environment and observing the behavior of others as they do from any text book or lecture, what do you think the students portrayed in the film, or watching the film, are learning from:

- Ho'onani?
- The girls in Ho'onani's class?
- The high school boys?
- Ho'onani's mother?
- Kumu Hina?
- Principal Laara?

3. When students are receiving leis according to gender (with different colors for girls and boys), Ho'onani declares, "I want to just wear both." Why does Ho'onani want two leis? How do you think Ho'onani felt to receive and wear both leis? What message(s) did the staff convey, both to Ho'onani and to her classmates by allowing her to wear two leis? Would you have allowed Ho'onani to wear both colors? Why or why not? If not, how would you have responded to her request?

4. Kumu Hina says, "When I was in high school, I had a very rough time. I was teased and tormented for being too girlish." Do you have any students like Hina in your school? How do you respond

when they are teased? What do you think they would want you to do? How do you know?

5. What sorts of things do you do or say to proactively support students who are "different" (or, as Ho'onani put it, "rare")? What do you do to create a climate in which every student feels confident, safe, and respected?

6. What difference does it make for Ho'onani to have a teacher who understands – from personal history – her experience of being "in the middle?" Do your students have any teachers who are "like them" (e.g. the same race, religion, gender, from the same neighborhood, etc.)? What difference does it make for the students? How about for the teachers? How can teachers who aren't like their students still connect or provide support?

7. Principal Laara lectures her students about respecting Kumu Hina, Hawaiian traditions, and the true meaning of *aloha*. Have you ever lectured your students in a similar way? Was the tactic effective in inspiring students to improve? What other strategies might work to foster tolerance, respect, and kindness among students?

8. Ho'onani's mother, Jozie Kamai, says that she chose to send her daughters to a Hawaiian Charter School because she wanted them to learn about their culture, and that what they gain from the school is "the confidence to just stand up in front of other people and do your best." How does learning about one's own culture provide students with confidence? How does the school's emphasis on honoring and preserving students' indigenous culture contribute to the acceptance of people who are in the middle or *māhū*? What role do students' cultures play in your school's curriculum? In terms of honoring or integrating students' home cultures, what does your school do well and what could it do better?

9. Kumu Hina worries about the potential backfire from parents and families for her support of Ho'onani. If a teacher at your school experienced such backfire, what would you do? How could the teacher (or their principal) effectively address the family's concerns



and also support the student? As an ally, what would you say to your colleague, the general student body and/or the school board?

10. Kumu Hina is concerned her encouragement of Ho'onani might be setting up the youngster for disappointment in a world that might not be so accepting. In your view, should Hina or the school do more to prepare Ho'onani for a "real world" that might not accept her, and if so, what should they do? How would/do you solve this conundrum?

#### TIPS FOR LEADING A DISCUSSION

Some communities still find it uncomfortable to address variations in human experience, and students who grow up in such places aren't likely to have a lot of practice talking publicly about the issues raised in the film. These tips can help you create an environment in which a discussion can be productive for everyone:

**If you anticipate resistance from parents, inform administrators and families ahead of time.** Be clear about what you will and won't be discussing, why the discussion is important, and how it relates to curriculum goals.

**Acknowledge students' discomfort.** Remind students that everyone is in the same boat and that no one will force them to reveal anything about themselves that they don't want to share. This is especially important for middle or high school students who are just beginning to grapple with their sexuality and gender.

**Make sure that students understand the difference between "sex" and "gender."** This isn't a conversation about sex. (Ho'onani is eleven – she's not even dating!). It's about identity and the social roles we attach to being male and female.

**Establish language ground rules.** Encourage students to speak only for themselves and not generalize or presume to know how others feel. As a group, decide if there are terms that should be off limits and provide acceptable alternatives (see the glossary on page 5 - 6). Depending on the maturity level of your students, remind them that insults, personal attacks, or even a denigrating tone of voice undermine effective communication (and are, therefore, unaccept-

able). Reinforce a climate of respect with the language you use to pose questions (e.g., instead of inviting judgment by asking "What did you *think* about [insert person]?", ask, "What did you *learn* from [insert person]?")

**Clarify the difference between dialogue and debate.** A debate is about staking out a position and trying to convince everyone else that you are right and they are wrong. A dialogue is about exchanging ideas in order to learn from one another. Unlike what students may have seen on talk shows or reality TV, that means actively listening as well as talking. It also means that you aren't trying to force students to accept a particular set of values or beliefs.

**Remind students that whether we personally value gender diversity or not, we live in a democracy that values individual liberty.** That means we have to find a way to work with all kinds of people and treat everyone with respect. Engaging in dialogue is one way we learn how to do that.

**Invite students to share their honest opinions and not just say what they think you (or others) want to hear.** Avoid leading questions and assure students that they won't be graded on what they say or believe.

**Leave time to brainstorm actions.** Addressing injustice can lead to anger, sadness, and cynicism. The best way to avoid getting stuck in negative emotions is to engage in positive actions.

**Be prepared to protect vulnerable students.** Keep an eye out for students who seem to be struggling or upset. Offer to speak with them privately and be sure to have handy a list of local resources, support services, or professionals who can help.

# LEARNING STANDARDS

You can use a screening of *A Place in the Middle* to help students meet many key education standards. In this section, you find a sampling of the possibilities.

## Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects - Grades 6-12 (<http://www.corestandards.org>)

### Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening:

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.  
SL.1.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
  - a. Work with peers to set rules for collegial discussions and decision-making.
  - b. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
  - c. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.
2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Though students will be viewing a film as text, rather than reading a printed text, they will engage in these skills from the **Anchor Standards for Reading:**

1. Cite evidence to support analysis and conclusions; make logical inferences.
2. Determine central ideas or themes and summarize key supporting details and ideas.  
RI.2 Distinguish the ideas in a "text" from personal opinions or judgments.
3. Interpret words and phrases (including connotative meanings), and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone
4. Assess how point of view shapes content.
5. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually.
6. Delineate and evaluate arguments and specific claims, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
7. Comprehend informational "text."

Depending on the activities you choose, students may also cover these **Anchor Standards for Writing:**

1. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
2. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
3. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
4. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## NCSS National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (<http://socialstudies.org/standards/strands>)

### 1. CULTURE

*Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.*

### 2. INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY

*Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.*

### 5. INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS

*Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.*

### 6. POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE

*Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.*

### 10. CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES

*Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.*



## Teaching Tolerance Anti-bias Framework (Grades 6-8) (<http://tolerance.org/anti-bias-framework>)

The Teaching Tolerance Anti-bias Framework is divided into four domains: Identity, Diversity, Justice and Action. Each domain includes five anchor standards, which are further broken out into performance outcomes for each grade-level band. The following are the 20 performance outcomes appropriate for setting and assessing anti-bias teaching goals for the middle grades.

### IDENTITY

*Students will understand the multiple facets of their identities, know where those traits come from, and feel comfortable being themselves in a diversity of settings.*

ID.6-8.1 I know and like who I am and can comfortably talk about my family and myself and describe our various group identities.

ID.6-8.2 I know about my family history and culture and how I am connected to the collective history and culture of other people in my identity groups.

ID.6-8.3 I know that overlapping identities combine to make me who I am and that none of my group identities on their own fully defines me or any other person.

ID.6-8.4 I feel good about my many identities and know they don't make me better than people with other identities.

ID.6-8.5 I know there are similarities and differences between my home culture and the other environments and cultures I encounter, and I can be myself in a diversity of settings.

### DIVERSITY

*Students will recognize the diversity of people in the world, be able to identify differences and commonalities, express interest in the lived experiences of others and develop genuine connections with others.*

DI.6-8.6 I interact with people who are similar to and different from me, and I show respect to all people.

DI.6-8.7 I can accurately and respectfully describe ways that people (including myself) are similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.

DI.6-8.8 I am curious and want to know more about other people's histories and lived experiences, and I ask questions respectfully and listen carefully and nonjudgmentally.

DI.6-8.9 I know I am connected to other people and can relate to them even when we are different or when we disagree.

DI.6-8.10 I can explain how the way groups of people are treated today, and the way they have been treated in the past, shapes their group identity and culture.

### JUSTICE

*Students will be aware of bias and injustice, both individual and systemic, will understand the short and long-term impact of injustice, and will know about those who have fought for more fairness and justice in our world.*

JU.6-8.11 I relate to people as individuals and not representatives of groups, and I can name some common stereotypes I observe people using.

JU.6-8.12 I can recognize and describe unfairness and injustice in many forms including attitudes, speech, behaviors, practices and laws.

JU.6-8.13 I am aware that biased words and behaviors and unjust practices, laws and institutions limit the rights and freedoms of people based on their identity groups.

JU.6-8.14 I know that all people (including myself) have certain advantages and disadvantages in society based on who they are and where they were born.

JU.6-8.15 I know about some of the people, groups and events in social justice history and about the beliefs and ideas that influenced them.

### ACTION

*Students will feel confident that they can make a difference in society and will commit to taking action against bias and injustice even when it is not popular or easy.*

AC.6-8.16 I am concerned about how people (including myself) are treated and feel for people when they are excluded or mistreated because of their identities.

AC.6-8.17 I know how to stand up for myself and for others when faced with exclusion, prejudice and injustice.

AC.6-8.18 I can respectfully tell someone when his or her words or actions are biased or hurtful.

AC.6-8.19 I will speak up or take action when I see unfairness, even if those around me do not, and I will not let others convince me to go along with injustice.

AC.6-8.20 I will work with friends, family and community members to make our world fairer for everyone, and we will plan and coordinate our actions in order to achieve our goals.

It is possible that a single segment of the film will address multiple standards and even multiple domains. For example, this statement (made by Kumu), "I have coined the term *kāne-wahine* (girl-boys) and *wahine-kāne* (boy-girls) to address my students whom exude both male and female. So when the boys stand up and the girls stand up, they also know there's a place in the middle for the *kāne-wahine* and the *wahine-kāne*," includes multiple standards: Identity 2 and 3 and Diversity 6, 7 and 8.

## **NĀ HOPENA A’O – NATIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

*Nā Hopena A’o or HĀ (breath) are a series of learning outcomes rooted in indigenous educational philosophy suggested by the Hawai’i Board of Education Advisory Work Group for strengthening in every student. A screening and guided discussion of A Place in the Middle can be used to help students achieve several of these goals, which are adaptable to a variety of native cultures.*

### **1. STRENGTHENED SENSE OF BELONGING: HE PILI WEHENA ‘OLE**

*Every student stands firm in his/her space with a strong foundation of relationships. A sense of belonging is demonstrated through an understanding of lineage and place and a connection to past, present, and future. S/he is able to interact respectfully for the betterment of self and others.*

1. Knows who s/he is and where s/he is from
2. Builds relationships with many diverse people
3. Cares about these relationships to others
4. Is open to new ideas and different ways of doing things
5. Understands how actions affect others
6. Actively participates in school and communities

### **2. STRENGTHENED SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY: MA KA HANA KA ‘IKE, MA KA ‘IMI KA LOA’A**

*Every student willingly carries his or her responsibility for self, family, community and the larger society. A sense of Responsibility is demonstrated by a commitment and concern for others. S/he is mindful of the values, needs and welfare of others.*

1. Questions ideas and listens generously
2. Makes good decisions with moral courage and integrity in every action
3. Honors and makes family, school and communities proud

### **3. STRENGTHENED SENSE OF EXCELLENCE: ‘A’OHE ‘ULA E LOA’A I KA PŌKOLE O KA LOU**

*Every student believes s/he can succeed in school and life and is inspired to care about the quality of his/her work. A sense of Excellence is demonstrated by a love of learning and the pursuit of skills, knowledge and behaviors to reach his or her potential. S/he is able to take intellectual risks and strive beyond what is expected.*

1. Knows and applies unique gifts and abilities to a purpose
2. Takes initiative without being asked
3. Utilizes creativity and imagination to problem-solve and innovate

### **4. STRENGTHENED SENSE OF ALOHA: E ‘ŌPŪ ALI’I**

*Every student shows care and respect for his/her self, families, and communities. A sense of Aloha is demonstrated through empathy and appreciation for the symbiotic relationship between all. S/he is able to build trust and lead for the good of the whole.*

1. Gives generously of time and knowledge
2. Appreciates the gifts and abilities of others
3. Makes others feel comfortable and welcome
4. Communicates effectively to diverse audiences
5. Responds mindfully to what is needed
6. Gives joyfully without expectation of reward
7. Shares the responsibility for collective work
8. Spreads happiness

### **5. STRENGTHENED SENSE OF TOTAL WELL-BEING: UA OLA LOKO I KE ALOHA**

*Every student learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle. A sense of Total Well-being is demonstrated by making choices that improve the mind, body, heart and spirit. S/he is able to meet the demands of school and life while contributing to the well-being of family, ‘āina, community and world.*

1. Feels safe physically and emotionally
2. Develops self-discipline to make good choices
3. Engages in positive, social interactions and has supportive relationships
4. Promotes wellness in others

### **6. STRENGTHENED SENSE OF HAWAI’I: ‘O HAWAI’I KU’U ‘ĀIAN KILOHANA**

*Every student is enriched by the uniqueness of this prized place. A sense of Hawai’i is demonstrated through an appreciation for its rich history, diversity and indigenous language and culture. S/he is able to navigate effectively across cultures and communities and be a steward of the homeland.*

1. Pronounces and understands Hawaiian everyday conversational words
2. Uses Hawaiian words appropriate to their task
3. Learns the names, stories, special characteristics and the importance of places in Hawai’i
4. Learns and applies Hawaiian traditional world view and knowledge in contemporary settings
5. Shares the histories, stories, cultures and languages of Hawai’i
6. Compares and contrasts different points of views, cultures and their contributions
7. Treats Hawai’i with pride and respect
8. Calls Hawai’i home

## LINKS AND REFERENCES

### THE FILM

#### **Kumu Hina**

<http://www.kumuhina.com> – Official film website with news, updates, and information on how to obtain the film.

<http://facebook.com/kumuhina> – Facebook page provides an opportunity for viewers to communicate with the Kumu Hina team and one another

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/kumu-hina/> - PBS Independent Lens site for the film, which includes the gender diversity map

#### **A Place in the Middle**

<http://aplaceinthemiddle.org> - Home website for the children's version of the film, with downloadable educational resources and links to view the film in multiple languages

#### **Pacific Islanders in Communications**

<http://piccom.org/pages/for-educators> - Additional films and resources for learning about Pacific Islander life and culture

### HAWAII

#### **Hawai'i Alive – Bringing Hawaiian Culture to Life**

<http://hawaiialive.org/> – Bishop Museum Web site with articles on a wide range of Hawaiian cultural and historical topics. These are linked to the museum's collections and to the relevant Hawai'i State Educational Standards.

#### **Hawai'i and Native Hawaiians - What You May Not Know**

<http://hawaiianscribe.hubpages.com/hub/Hawaii-and-Native-Hawaiians-What-You-May-Not-Know> - This 2013 article by Stephanie Namahoe Launiu is a short resource aimed at newcomers to Hawaiian history.

#### **Native Land and Foreign Desires: Pehea Lā E Pono Ai? How Shall We Live in Harmony?**

This 1992 book by Lilikala Kame'Eleihiwa explores the political, cultural, spiritual, economic, and social changes in Hawaiian culture from pre-contact up to the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy.

#### **History of Hula in Hawai'i**

<http://www.paulwaters.com/hulaenc.htm>

<http://www.kaimi.org/education/history-of-hula/>

#### **Then There Were None**

<http://www.piccom.org/programs/then-there-were-none#moreContent>

- This 2013 documentary film is “a story born from unspoken words, unshed tears, and wounded spirits. It is an effort to give voice to kupuna (elders), who have become strangers in their own land. To millions of travelers the world over, Hawai'i is an alluring picture postcard paradise. But to its Native Hawaiian people, nothing could be further from the truth.”

#### **Timelines of Hawaiian History**

<http://hawaiihistory.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=ig.page&CategoryID=259>

<http://www.mauiapp.com/moolelo/chronology.htm#Pre-Contact>

### GENDER

#### **Native Men Remade: Gender and Nation in Contemporary Hawai'i**

This 2008 book by Ty P. Kāwika Tengan tells the fascinating story of how gender, culture, class, and personality intersect as a group of indigenous Hawaiian men work to overcome the dislocations of colonial history.

#### **Two Spirits, One Struggle: The Front Lines of Being First Nations and Gay**

<http://www.westender.com/news/two-spirits-one-struggle-the-front-lines-of-being-first-nations-and-gay-1.1269015> – A 2014 article by Kelsey Klassen. Scroll down to the section “Taking back two-spirit” to learn more about the history of two-spirit peoples.

#### **Understanding Transgender**

[http://transequality.org/Resources/NCTE\\_UnderstandingTrans.pdf](http://transequality.org/Resources/NCTE_UnderstandingTrans.pdf) - A helpful resource from the National Center for Transgender Equality.

#### **Human Rights Campaign**

<http://.hrc.org/resources/entry/transgender-visibility-guide> - This downloadable pamphlet includes resources for those who are beginning to identify as transgender.

### ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION STRATEGIES

#### **Teaching Tolerance**

<http://tolerance.org/LGBT-best-practices-terms> - Among their many resources for creating a school climate that is supportive of LGBT students, the Teaching Tolerance project of the Southern Poverty Law Center offers this helpful glossary of terms.

#### **Perspectives for a Diverse America**

<http://perspectives.tolerance.org/> - Also from Teaching Tolerance, this is a standards-style framework for anti-bias education.

#### **GLSEN**

<http://glsen.org> – The resources offered by the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network include the National School Climate Survey on the realities of school life for LGBT youth, as well as guidelines for establishing Gay-Straight Alliance, teaching strategies, and lesson plans.

#### **GLAAD**

[http://files.glaad.org/files/2011/documents/talkingabout\\_terminology.pdf](http://files.glaad.org/files/2011/documents/talkingabout_terminology.pdf) - The “Ally’s Guide to Terminology” – published by the largest anti-defamation organization in the U.S. focused on the LGBT community – clarifies terminology for people engaged in conversations about LGBT people and issues

#### **The Bully Project**

<http://www.thebullyproject.com> – This documentary film-inspired project has evolved into a national social action campaign to stop bullying. A wide variety of useful tools are available for educators, parents, students and advocates.

#### **Welcoming Schools**

<http://www.welcomingschools.org> – Resources for elementary schools on avoiding gender stereotyping and affirming gender, embracing family diversity, and ending bullying and name-calling.

# STUDENT EVALUATION

## 1. How educational was *A Place in the Middle* in your experience?

- Very uninformative     Uninformative     Average     Informative     Very informative

## 2. How much about the following topics do you feel you learned by watching *A Place in the Middle*?

- A. *Hawai'i's history*     Nothing     A little     Some     A lot     Very much  
B. *The concept of māhū*     Nothing     A little     Some     A lot     Very much  
C. *What it means to be "in the middle"*     Nothing     A little     Some     A lot     Very much  
D. *Reasons to maintain culture*     Nothing     A little     Some     A lot     Very much  
E. *The meaning of aloha*     Nothing     A little     Some     A lot     Very much

## 3. How interesting was *A Place in the Middle* compared to other films you've watched at school?

- Very boring     Boring     Average     Interesting     Very interesting

## 4. How much do you agree or disagree with each of these statements about watching *A Place in the Middle*?

- A. *This film is relevant to my own life.*     Disagree strongly     Disagree somewhat     Neutral     Agree somewhat     Agree strongly  
B. *The film affected me emotionally.*     Disagree strongly     Disagree somewhat     Neutral     Agree somewhat     Agree strongly  
C. *I thought about how I would respond to situations in the film*     Disagree strongly     Disagree somewhat     Neutral     Agree somewhat     Agree strongly

## 5. After watching *A Place in the Middle*, how likely is it that you will take the following actions?

- A. *Look for more information about Hawai'i and the Pacific Islands*     Very unlikely     Unlikely     Not sure     Likely     Very likely  
B. *Make more effort to reach out to people who are different than me*     Very unlikely     Unlikely     Not sure     Likely     Very likely  
C. *Try to make my school more welcoming for all students*     Very unlikely     Unlikely     Not sure     Likely     Very likely  
D. *Pledge to live aloha, and encourage others to do the same*     Very unlikely     Unlikely     Not sure     Likely     Very likely

## 6. Before watching *A Place in the Middle*, what did you know about the meaning of "māhū" and "in the middle?"

- Didn't know anything  
 Thought māhū was a bad word  
 Wasn't sure what these terms meant  
 Knew the basic ideas but not the details  
 Already knew everything in the film

## 7. After watching *A Place in the Middle*, what is your understanding of the meaning of "māhū" and "in the middle?"

- Still don't understand  
 Understand the meaning but don't support the idea  
 Have better understanding and appreciation  
 Now I admire māhū & people in the middle  
 Understand and support the meaning and want to tell others

## 8. Please indicate whether you think the following statements are accurate:

- A. *I am responsible for perpetuating my culture.*     Very inaccurate     Inaccurate     Not sure     Accurate     Very accurate  
B. *The meaning of gender can change over time.*     Very inaccurate     Inaccurate     Not sure     Accurate     Very accurate  
C. *There are certain things that should only be done by boys or only by girls.*     Very inaccurate     Inaccurate     Not sure     Accurate     Very accurate  
D. *We can learn a lot from the past.*     Very inaccurate     Inaccurate     Not sure     Accurate     Very accurate

## 9. In your opinion, *A Place in the Middle* would be best for students in?


- K-3rd grade     4 -6th grade     7-8th grade     9-10th grade     11-12th grade

## 10. What is the most important thing you learned from this film?

## 11. How will what you learned affect the way you think or what you do?

## 12. How old are you?

## 13. What is your gender?



# Pledge of Aloha

I believe that every person has a role in society, and deserves to be included and treated with respect in their family, school, and community.

I believe that every person should be free to express what is truly in their heart and mind, whether male, female, or in the middle.

I believe that every person should be able to practice their cultural traditions, and to know and perpetuate the wisdom of their ancestors for future generations.

I believe these values are embodied in aloha: love, honor and respect for all.

Therefore, I pledge to live aloha in everything I do, and to inspire people of all ages to do the same.



Take the Pledge at [APlaceintheMiddle.org](http://APlaceintheMiddle.org)





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Tracy Flynn, Welcoming Schools

Kristen Lehner, PBS Learning Media

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**Editor:** Nels Bangerter

**Animation:** Jared Greenleaf & Jed Henry

**Original Score:** Makana

**Cultural Advisors:** Leonelle Akana

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### SUPPORTERS

**Independent Television Service**

<http://itvs.org>



**Pacific Islanders in Communications**

<http://www.piccom.org/>



### PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

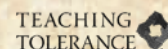
**PBS Learning Media**

<http://www.pbslearningmedia.org>



**Teaching Tolerance**

<http://www.tolerance.org>



**Welcoming Schools**

<http://www.welcomingschools.org>



**Gender Spectrum**

<http://www.genderspectrum.org>



**Our Family Coalition**

<http://www.ourfamily.org>



**Hawai'i People's Fund**

<http://www.hawaiipeoplesfund.org>



**Ford Foundation**

<http://www.fordfoundation.org>



**I mau ka 'ike kupuna o ke au I hala iā kākou nā hanauna o ke au nei.** *May the ancestral understandings of the past live on through the practices of the present generation.*

*A Place in the Middle* is the true story of Ho'onani, a remarkable eleven year old girl who dreams of leading the hula troupe at her inner-city Honolulu school. The only trouble is that the group is just for boys. She's fortunate that her teacher understands first-hand what it's like to be "in the middle" - the ancient Hawaiian tradition of embracing both male and female spirit. As student and teacher prepare for a climactic end-of-year performance, together they set out to prove that what matters most is what's inside a person's heart and mind.

Utilize this guidebook along with the film to help your students appreciate the value of inclusion, the strengths they inherit from their cultural heritage, and their own power to create a school climate free of bullying and full of respect and honor for all.

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**"An inspiring coming-of-age story on the power of culture to shape identity, personal agency, and community cohesion, from a young person's point of view."**

*- Cara Mertes, Ford Foundation*

**"A valuable teaching tool for students in elementary, middle and high schools, and for parents and teachers."**

*- Carol Crouch, Ele'ele Elementary School, Kaua'i, Hawai'i*

**"A true-life 'Whale Rider' story. "**

*- The Huffington Post*

**"A *Place in the Middle* is part of the continuing revival and growth of awareness of Kanaka Maoli traditions that are so relevant today."**

*- Professor Puakea Nogelmeier,  
Hawai'inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge,  
University of Hawai'i*

**"One of the most positive films about the trans experience I've ever seen. "**

*- Jennifer Finney Boylan, author & writer-in-residence, Barnard College*

**"A powerful film that breathes with life."**

*- Indiewire*

**"Uniquely accessible for youth."**

*- Gender Spectrum*