

Home Sweet Home
Wendie Kim
Manoa Elementary

The Home Sweet Home project is a year-long project, which began with an introduction to the different spheres of Earth, habitats and environments. During the first quarter, the students focused on the *lithosphere*. The children learned about the importance of microbes in soil and on land through hands-on science inquiry activities. The second quarter focused on the *biosphere*. The children learned about how microbes play an important role in the plant life cycle as well as the food web.

The third quarter focused on the *hydrosphere* with emphasis on the ocean. The children worked in partnership with Roosevelt High School marine biology students to learn about the organisms in the ocean, from plankton to animals from different phyla. They went on a study trip to Kewalo Basin at Ala Moana Beach Park to collect samples of the microbes that live in the environment. The students dispersed into their small groups to collect samples from different transects. Each group collected animals at 5 meter and 10 meter transects and documented where these animals were found.

Finally, a brave volunteer went out at least 20 meters and used the plankton net to collect plankton. At the end of the study trip, the students returned all the marine animals to their original habitat. When they returned to school, the children compiled their data of marine animals that they found along the different transects. Then, they observed the microbes that were collected, using a high-magnification microscope.

The next group of children will return around the same time the following year to conduct sampling in the same area. Although the students will be different from the previous year, the data they collect will help them to determine the population of the microbes and marine animals in that area over time. We ended the unit with lessons on the *ionosphere*. The children learned how all the spheres are interdependent and that the organisms that live there play a vital role.

The students were amazed at the discovery of microbes that live in our environment. Their hands-on experience of collecting and observing the plankton from Kewalo Basin taught them about the wonders of nature. They learned the importance of both living and non-living things in our environment. The students also learned that animals and plants are interdependent and need to sustain a balance in our environment. Finally, they realized the impact humans can have in our environment and that we must make wise decisions in order to sustain our Home Sweet Home.