

## Valerie E. Rita

“Val” Rita is a lead teacher at Na Kama Pono ECDC/Lab School located at Kaua'i Community College. A proud mother of three and a grandmother of seven, Val credits her own father in encouraging her to leave her job as a waitress to do something she was really “meant to do.” So when she was 41 years of age back in 1994, she started working in early childhood education and child advocacy. Val hasn't looked back since and now feels she makes a difference with children each and every day. “From that faithful day 16 years ago to where destiny has led me today, I have looked at and continue to see the world through new eyes - the innocent, inquisitive excited eyes of our children!”

Throughout these years Val has taken on many roles, teaching children from toddlerhood up to age 18. She also worked as a Play and Learn Group Facilitator and Parent Education Facilitator. Val became more involved in helping the whole family and worked in communities that were considered “at risk,” including children of incarcerated parents. The experience reinforced her belief that children need to have the best, most solid foundation as early as possible. The experience also reminded her of her calling - what she was really meant to do - and that is to be the best preschool teacher she can be. She is happy to be back in the classroom at Kaua'i Community College surrounded by parents and coworkers who share her vision to “to provide a strong foundation and to give children endless opportunities to laugh, play and have fun.”

### What parents had to say about Val:

“Na Kama Pono offers a quality program that is supportive and nurturing. The success of their program is, in large part, due to Auntie Val...Over the last 3 years our child's needs have significantly changed. Auntie Val took the initiative to provide activities that are appropriate for his age and abilities, i.e. adding a computer, math and reading corner, providing advanced writing activities, and giving him opportunities to demonstrate leadership...She is creative, forward thinking, and open to trying new things. We truly feel that our son has build a strong foundation that will help him transition to Kindergarten and beyond. Most importantly, our son loves school!”

“She communicates well with both the children and the parents, adjusting her content, tone of voice and choice of words depending on who she's speaking with. Parents are always invited into the classroom to observe, participate and even to teach the kids. Parents are informed of new programs, projects and activities before hand, and are given suggestions of how to reinforce the lessons taught at school in the home.”

“I truly appreciate Ms. Val's openness and aloha she has for the children. She shows a true passion for what she does, and she always puts the children's and parent's interest first. She spends quality time with each child and gets to know them for who they are. She also takes the time to spend with parents and get to know them as a family...Val is not afraid to try new things and methods when teaching the children. She allows them to explore and be themselves. She also extends this respect to the staff that she works with.”

“Val is always welcoming every morning with a big ‘Good morning and how are you today?’ She is able to relate to the children and will talk to them with respect...She also celebrates Hawai'i's special places while paying respect to all cultures and diversities. This is important to my child because he is always excited to see what is new at school and what possibilities await him for the day. I think one of Val's greatest gifts is to know what to do for the children at the right time...If issues arise, Val is able to communicate to each child about the subject and help them understand. I think this is very important for the children to feel welcomed and have an environment that they feel they are safe.”