

# 2026 Eddie Would Go Essay Contest



## About Eddie Aikau

**“EDDIE WOULD GO”** These few words have carried the story of Eddie Aikau around the world. Eddie Aikau was a humble, quiet person with a reputation for courage. The saying, *“Actions speak louder than words”* is very much a part of his story.

One of the greatest Hawaiian surfers who ever lived, he was one of the few surfers who rode “mountains,” the huge winter waves at Waimea Bay on the North Shore of Oahu. Eddie surfed with a passion and determination possessed by only a select group of professional athletes—those who become one with the ocean and an extension of its power. Surrounded with the ocean, he simply enjoyed the challenges it offered. For Eddie, the ocean was a spiritual place. He met its challenges with the utmost respect.

His skills as a big wave surfer and his love of the ocean gave him the determination to become one of the first City and County lifeguards on the North Shore of Oahu. Eddie became the guardian of Waimea Bay and continued to surf some of the biggest waves in the world. He took on the responsibility, not only of helping to make the beaches safer, but of willingly sharing his knowledge of the ocean with visitors to Hawaii, so they could enjoy the beautiful beaches and go home safely to their family and friends. Eddie understood the importance of being trained and ready to make a rescue at any time. He had to communicate and cooperate with others who helped during these rescues. When the ocean threatened the life of anyone near him, whether he was on duty or not, Eddie would risk his life without hesitation to save anyone in danger and he always showed compassion. In 1971, he was awarded the highest honor as the Honolulu City

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& County Lifeguard of the Year. Eddie's heroics as a lifeguard became legendary and proved even then that "Eddie Would Go."

But foremost in Eddie's heart was his family. He loved his "*Ohana*" and upheld the Aikau family name with integrity and honor. The values that he was taught by his mother and father were evident in everything he did. He was very proud of his Hawaiian heritage, preserving his ancestry and culture was very important to him.

One of Eddie's dreams was to sail on the *Hokule`a*, an 8 ton, 62 feet-long, double-hull Polynesian voyaging canoe. To Eddie, the *Hokule`a* was a true symbol of his Hawaiian heritage and the future — the heart and the soul of Hawaii. Eddie was a surfer, not an experienced sailor, but he was determined to become a member of the crew. With his passion and dedication, he achieved his dream and was selected to be a crew member for the 1978 voyage to Tahiti.

On March 16, 1978, the *Hokule`a* set sail with Eddie on board. Late that night the double-hull canoe capsized in rough weather. After many hours spent clinging to the overturned canoe in the stormy seas, it seemed that no one would be rescued. It was natural that Eddie would offer to go for help. So, Eddie went! He paddled away on his surfboard, but was never seen again. The rest of the crew was rescued soon after. It is Eddie's spirit filling the sails of the *Hokule`a* today as he guides her every voyage.

Eddie Aikau was a legendary big wave surfer, a heroic lifeguard, who made the ultimate sacrifice for his fellow crew members on the 1978 voyage of the *Hokule`a*. His legacy is not to live solely for yourself, but to help each other and to be of service. He truly embodied the Aloha Spirit.

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### About the Essay Contest

- **Eligibility** - The Eddie Aikau Essay contest is open to all students in grade levels **7, 8, 9, and 10** who are currently enrolled in public or private schools, or participate in a home-school program who live in Hawaii.
- **The 2026 Essay Contest writing PROMPT is:**

Eddie Aikau, a well-known Hawaiian big wave surfer and the North Shore's first City & County Lifeguard at Waimea Bay, embodied the spirit of selflessness. His life culminated in an act of ultimate sacrifice during the 1978 voyage of the Hōkūle‘a. When the 60-foot voyaging canoe capsized in a storm, Eddie paddled out on his surfboard to seek help, and was subsequently lost at sea. Central to his legacy is the fundamental Hawaiian value of **Lōkahi**, which translates to **harmony, unity, and balance**. This concept is often visualized as a triangle representing the balance between three essential relationships:

- *Ke Akua* (The Divine or Spiritual Realm)
- *Ke Kanaka* (Humanity/People)
- *Ka ‘Āina* (The Land and Environment)

Describe how the value of **Lōkahi** was reflected in the actions and life of Eddie Aikau. Support your response with specific examples or evidence.

Describe how the value of **Lōkahi** influences your personal philosophy and the actions you take in your life. Support your response with specific examples or evidence

- Student applications for eligible students will be available on the **Eddie Aikau Foundation** website at: [www.eddieaikaufoundation.org](http://www.eddieaikaufoundation.org)
- **The Student Application form must be completed & signed by the Student and a parent or legal guardian.** Submit it with the completed essay. Students must provide email addresses and phone numbers for their parent or legal guardian on the application.
- Essays may be submitted in **English or Hawaiian** language.

### ENGLISH DIVISION

- All properly completed Student Applications and essays that are **POSTMARKED, or Emailed** on or before **Friday February 20, 2026** will be accepted from eligible students in each grade level (7, 8, 9 & 10). Essays for **each grade level** will be judged **separately**.

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### **HAWAIIAN LANGUAGE DIVISION**

- The Hawaiian language division is open to all eligible students in each grade level (7, 8, 9 & 10). All properly completed Student Applications and essays that are **POSTMARKED, or Emailed** on or before **Friday February 20, 2026** will be accepted. Essays from **all four (4) grade levels** in the Hawaiian language division will be ***combined*** for judging, unless the number of essays received warrants separating the submissions by grade level.
- The translation of the Essay PROMPT from English to **Hawaiian** will be posted on the Foundation website at: [www.eddieaikaufoundation.org](http://www.eddieaikaufoundation.org) for those students who wish to submit their essay in the Hawaiian language for judging.

### **Essay Requirements**

- The essay must be the student's OWN work.
- The essay should have a TITLE that captures the idea of the essay.
- The essay must **NOT** reveal the Student's Name or School anywhere on, or within the essay.
- The essay should be a MAXIMUM of 1000 words in length.
- The essay must be ***typewritten, double-spaced, in 12-point font*** size.
- Two (2) hard copies (***single sided only***) of the essay should be submitted when mailed. Or the essay can be emailed as a WORD, or a pdf document to: [eaf5446@gmail.com](mailto:eaf5446@gmail.com) ***Do not send the essay both ways.***
- **The essay should answer the following Prompt:**

Eddie Aikau, a well-known Hawaiian big wave surfer and the North Shore's first City & County Lifeguard at Waimea Bay, embodied the spirit of selflessness. His life culminated in an act of ultimate sacrifice during the 1978 voyage of the Hōkūleʻa. When the 60-foot voyaging canoe capsized in a storm, Eddie paddled out on his surfboard to seek help, and was subsequently lost at sea. Central to his legacy is the fundamental Hawaiian value of ***Lōkahi***, which translates to **harmony, unity, and balance**. This concept is often visualized as a triangle representing the balance between three essential relationships:

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### How the Contest is Run

- All essays & applications which meet the contest requirements **and** are properly received by the **February 20, 2026** deadline will be eligible for judging in either the English **or** Hawaiian language divisions.
- Awards in the **English** Division will include: First, Second, Third places and two (2) Honorable-mention awards for **each** grade level (7, 8, 9 & 10).
- Awards in the **Hawaiian** Language Division will include: First, Second, Third places and two (2) Honorable-mention awards for the **overall** division... 7, 8, 9 & 10<sup>th</sup> grade levels **combined**.
- **CASH** prizes will be awarded to the winners in the English Division and the Hawaiian Language Division as follows: First place **\$500**, Second place **\$350**, Third place **\$250**, and **\$100** for each of the two (2) Honorable-mention winners.
- If the number of completed essays received is exceptionally low, the **Eddie Aikau Foundation** Board of Directors reserves the right to make reasonable adjustments in the awards given.

### Judging Criteria – A maximum of 100 Points can be earned

#### I. **ESSAY CONTENT (70 Points)**

- Meaning (50 pts)  
Insight and understanding behind the words;  
There is a point to the writing, you create something worth reading.
- Voice (20 pts)  
The imprint of the writer;  
The reader of your essay has a sense of the writer behind the words; writing shows conviction and caring, and engages the reader.  
-The tone and the message are positive and reflect Eddie's values.  
-The essay cites examples from Eddie's life that answer the question posed in the Prompt.

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### II. PRESENTATION ( 20 Points )

- Clarity (10 pts)  
Word choice, language, and sentence structure clearly convey the intended meaning.
  
- Design (10 pts)  
Form and structure give the writing coherence and move the reader through the essay.
  - The essay is well organized and clearly written.
  - The writing is interrelated, cohesive and proportionate.
  - The writing gives the reader a complete message.
  - The writer's views are clearly stated.
  - The language is precise, vivid, clear and has meaning and purpose.

### III. WRITING SKILL ( 10 Points )

- The essay shows a grasp of standard writing skills of grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and paragraphing.

# 2026 Eddie Would Go Essay Contest

## Timeline

### **January 28, 2026 - Wednesday**

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Contest announcement posted on Foundation Website,  
& Social Media.  
Student Application and Contest Guidelines available online at  
[www.eddieaikaufoundation.org](http://www.eddieaikaufoundation.org)

### **February 20, 2026 – Friday (3 weeks)**

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**Postmark & Email** deadline for completed ESSAYS, which  
must include a SIGNED Student Application in order to be  
accepted for judging.  
Essays may be submitted by email, or mail.

### **March 5 to March 15 , 2026**

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**Remote** Judging sessions for all essays submitted by the  
deadline date that meets the Eligibility requirements.

### **March 31, 2026 - Tuesday**

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All Student Winners, Parents & Teachers notified.

### **April 5, 2026 - Sunday**

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Announce names of Student Winners.  
Post Names of Student Winners on the Foundation website.

### **April 18, 2026 - Saturday**

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Essay Awards presentation – Location to be Announced

## 2026 Eddie Would Go Essay Contest

### Contact Information

For questions and information, please contact:

**The Eddie Aikau Foundation**

email: [eaf5446@gmail.com](mailto:eaf5446@gmail.com)

### **TO SUBMIT BY MAIL:**

Mail TWO (2) copies (*single sided only*) of the essay AND the Signed Student Application to the following address:

**94-641 Kupuna Loop, Waipahu, HI 96797**

**Postmark Deadline Date: Friday February 20, 2026**

### **TO SUBMIT ELECTRONICALLY:**

Students may submit their Essay and the completed Signed Student Application *electronically* (by email) as follows:

email: [eaf5446@gmail.com](mailto:eaf5446@gmail.com)

**The SUBJECT Line of the email should indicate:**

**Student Name - Grade Level - School Name**

Email & attach the completed Essay & the SIGNED Student Application by the DEADLINE Date of: **Friday February 20, 2026**

The Email should be dated no later than **2/20/26** for the Essay to be eligible for judging.

Do **not** submit the essay both ways.

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### STUDENT APPLICATION

**Please clearly PRINT and complete ALL requested information**

#### Student Information

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ (Adult) T-Shirt Size: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Student's Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/LG's Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent's/LG's Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

#### School Information

School Attending: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ School Principal's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

By signing below, you and your parent or legal guardian give permission to the Eddie Aikau Foundation, the Hawaii DOE, and the Hawaii Association of Independent Schools to do the following: (1) use your name, your biographical information (other than mailing address), and your essay in their discretion in any lawful manner for non-commercial purposes, educational purposes, and promotional purposes associated with the Eddie Would Go Essay Contest (collectively, the "Permitted Purposes"); (2) reproduce your essay, along with your name and biographical information (other than mailing address), in any format, including but not limited to printed materials and digital and on-line formats such as the Internet, for the Permitted Purposes; (3) distribute your essay to third parties for the Permitted Purposes; and (4) if you are a contest winner, record and use your likeness, whether captured by means of a photograph, video recording, or another method, and voice, whether captured by means of audio recording or another method, for the Permitted Purposes in any format, including but not limited to printed materials and digital and on-line formats such as the Internet.

#### Required Signatures

\*Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Parent's or Legal Guardian's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Note: \*Use a digital signature in the Signature blocks OR print, sign, scan and email OR mail to address below.**

#### **Email or Send Completed Application and Essay Via . . .**

**Email:** [eaf5446@gmail.com](mailto:eaf5446@gmail.com) Note: Email essay and signed Student Application

**US Postal Service:** The Eddie Aikau Foundation, 94-641 Kupuna Loop, Waipahu, HI 96797

Note: Mail the signed Student Application and **two (2) printed copies** of the completed Essay.

**Email date or Postmark Deadline is Friday, February 20, 2026**

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## FOR THE STUDENT: TIPS AND REMINDERS FOR WRITING YOUR ESSAY

### **Before you write, do some research. Possible resources include:**

Read the book, “Eddie Would Go” by Stuart Coleman (found in St of HI public libraries).

View the **ESPN** documentary, “Hawaiian: The Legend of Eddie Aikau” *Teachers or parents may email the Foundation & we will arrange to lend a copy of the documentary to be shown to the students, subject to availability of supplies. Email the Foundation at: [info@eddieaikaufoundation.org](mailto:info@eddieaikaufoundation.org) to make the arrangements.*

Search the internet e.g., newspaper articles in *The Honolulu Star Advertiser*, various other magazines, and media resources.

Visit the Eddie Aikau Foundation website: [www.eddieaikaufoundation.org](http://www.eddieaikaufoundation.org)

Visit the Polynesian Voyaging Society website: <http://www.hokulea.com/voyages/our-story/>

Visit the Wikipedia website and learn about the history of the Big Wave Invitational In Memory of Eddie Aikau. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Eddie](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Eddie)

Visit the current website of “THE EDDIE” Big Wave Invitational, managed by the Eddie Aikau Foundation: <https://www.theeddieaikau.com/>

### **When you write:**

- Introduce yourself and your thoughts to the reader. Use an appropriate title that states your point of view to be expressed in the essay.
- Create an original piece of writing that takes the reader from your title, to the introduction, through the body of your essay, and finally to the conclusion, in a clear, concise manner.
- Develop a topic you can focus on which will deliver your ideas to the reader clearly and convincingly.
- Finish your essay well ahead of time so you can take a day or two to read it again for a final review. Read it aloud to yourself or an adult to decide if changes are needed.  
**Check that you've met all of the contest requirements:**
- The essay must be the student's OWN work.
- The essay should have a TITLE that captures the idea of the essay.
- The essay must NOT reveal the Student's Name or School anywhere on, or within the essay.
- The essay should be a MAXIMUM of 1000 words in length.
- The essay must be **typewritten, double-spaced**, and in **12-point font** size.
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Email Essay & Signed Student Application to: [eaf5446@gmail.com](mailto:eaf5446@gmail.com) **OR**

Mail the signed Student Application and 2 hard copies (single side only) of the completed Essay to: **The Eddie Aikau Foundation – 94-641 Kupuna Loop, Waipahu, HI 96797**

Email date or Postmark date Deadline is: **Friday February 20, 2026**