

NĀ LAU LAMA CULTURE-BASED EDUCATION

PRELIMINARY WORKING GROUP FINDINGS



BACKGROUND

The Culture-Based Education (CBE) working group members have a deep passion and appreciation for education that is relevant to the host Hawaiian culture, especially in communities that have high concentrations of Hawaiian and part-Hawaiian children. Many of our members have first-hand experiences in teaching, developing curricula and integrating different teaching strategies that put an emphasis on Hawaiian values and ways of knowing. This group focused on identifying content, methods and educational models rooted in Hawaiian culture that can be fully integrated in the mainstream educational realm for all children, faculty, staff and administration of the Department of Education.

The CBE working group, and others in the Nā Lau Lama initiative, have taken on the kuleana to help others connect our host culture to mainstream academics. Once we are able to make this connection, culturally-based academic content and methods will become meaningful and relevant to teachers and students, regardless of whether they are Hawaiian or non-Hawaiian. We believe it is possible to teach *all* academic subjects in the context of and through Hawaiian culture, by using the resources of the communities and places in which our haumāna live and our teachers teach, including using traditional Hawaiian learning sites.

Complete chapters may be found in forthcoming Nā Lau Lama Community Report. Your feedback is welcome at nalaulama@gmail.com.

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

Use the resources of the communities and places in which our haumāna live.

Placed-based educational strategies create relevance and meaningful learning experiences for students. Use traditional learning contexts like lo'i kalo, loko i'a, wa'a voyaging and wahi pana as well as share mo'olelo about the ahupua'a or moku our students live in.

Incorporate community service that empowers haumāna to make a difference in their community.

Community service teaches students about the role they play within their community and their kuleana to their community. Service learning encourages students to make meaningful connections to an authentic learning experience and empowers self-identity.

Create opportunities for haumāna to learn by doing.

When students are able to practically apply what they learn, they are able to understand concepts more completely. Their acquisition of knowledge is not just conceptual but becomes an lived learning experience that they can remember long after the lesson is complete.

Align culture-based education to other "real-world" opportunities for students, such as vocational or career development. These types of experiences motivate students to take ownership of their learning and plan for and invest in their futures.

Integrate Hawai'i Content & Performance Standards and Nā Honua Mauli Ola Guidelines into your culture-based curriculum.

HCPS and culture-based instruction are not mutually exclusive. Standards give a sense of alignment to appropriate benchmarks our students should be meeting while culture-based instruction motivates learning and informs how our students are being taught.

Rigor is a critical component of culture-based learning experiences.

Rigor, whether explicit or implicit, should never be compromised when designing a culture-based curriculum. Communicate clear learning objectives to students and set high expectations.

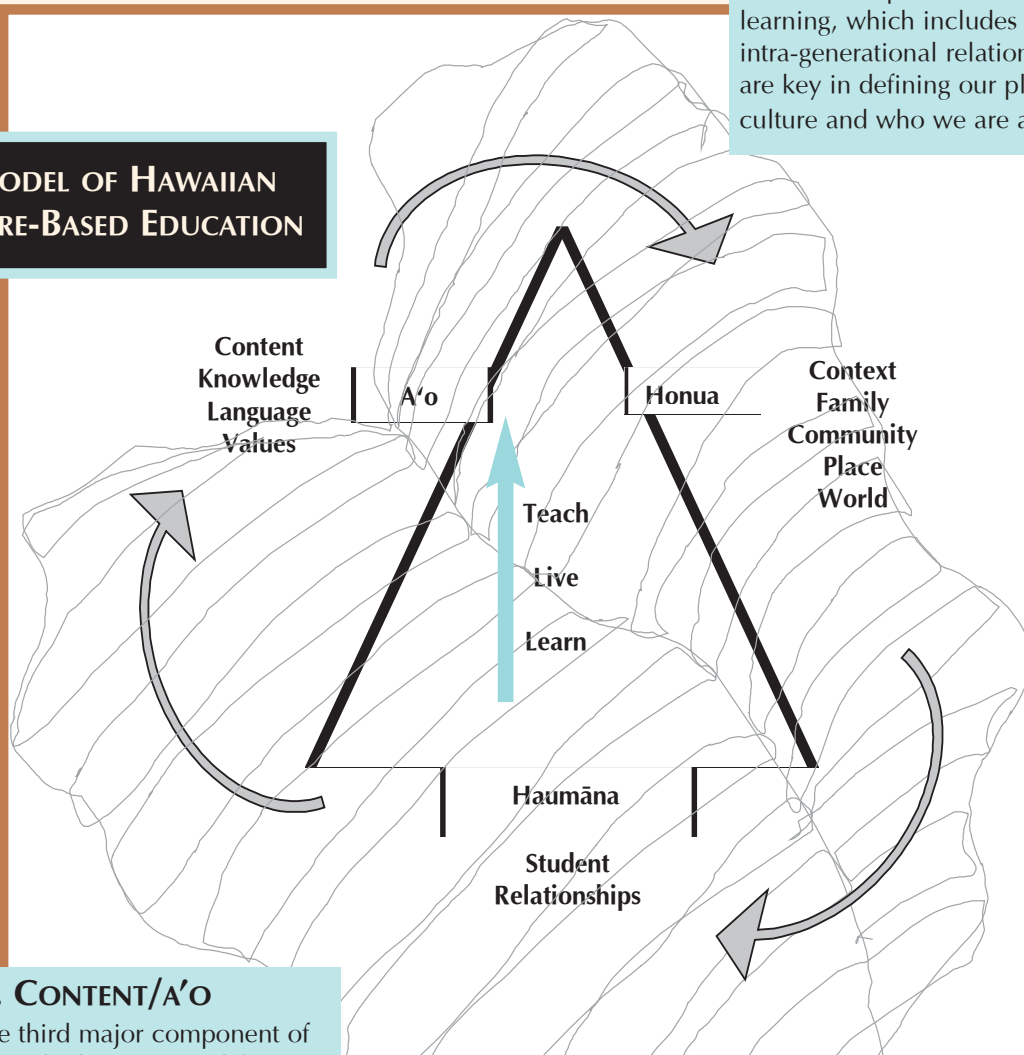
1. FOCUS ON THE HAUMĀNA/STUDENT

The focus begins with the needs of the haumāna or student. Research and experience teaches us that each haumāna learns at different times, in different ways and at different rates. Culture-based education utilizes an assortment of tools and educational strategies focused on developing each student's own innate gifts and abilities. Practical experience demonstrates that students learn best by doing. When involved in learning something of interest, students come to understand concepts more fully, remember them longer after the experience, and develop confidence in their ability to find things out and to understand the subject matter.

2. CONTEXT/HONUUA

Context is the second critical component in culture-based education. This is the factor that makes learning useful, applicable and relevant. Context is defined as family, school, community, ahupua'a, island and special culturally-significant places, such as wahi pana and pu'u honua. In Hawaiian, we call this context of learning the honua. Context is also about the internal and external components that contribute to learning, which includes the inter- and intra-generational relationships that are key in defining our place in our culture and who we are as a people.

A MODEL OF HAWAIIAN CULTURE-BASED EDUCATION



3. CONTENT/A'O

Content is the third major component of the culture-based education model. Content is knowledge, both cultural and academic, as well as the language and values of the culture as they are reflected in day-to-day living. In Hawaiian, this is called a'o, the reciprocal exchange of knowledge. Cultural content includes the protocols and practices that are necessary to understand how each haumāna relates to their honua (family, community, world), or context, of their learning.

4. SPIRITUALITY

Culture-based education requires the full integration of a fourth factor, spirituality. Spirituality is the critical fourth element and continues to be a source of empowerment that transcends the three essential ingredients of the triangle discussed above. The "Nā Lau" or kalo leaf is symbolic of the importance of spirituality in Hawaiian culture and to the Hawaiian people. The ways in which haumāna, along with a'o/content and honua/context, are embraced by the spiritual also are common elements that are reflected in all indigenous knowledge.

The depiction of the haumāna at the base of the triangle is symbolic of the foundation for all our educational endeavors. Each individual student must always strive for the highest, "Kūlia I Ka Nu'u," so that learning and living the knowledge will ultimately lead to the student becoming their own, and others', teacher as they add new knowledge to the world. The arrow pointing upwards from the haumāna to the ki'eki'e, or peak, of the triangle represents the striving for their own highest achievement in all their endeavors. As students mature and grow, we encourage them to follow these Hawaiian-culture based guidelines for learning:

Nānā ka maka
Ho'olohe ka pepeiao
Pa'a ka waha
Hana ka lima

See with your eyes
Listen with your ears
Don't speak too quickly
Work with your hands

The dynamic of the kalo leaf/triangle graphic also recognizes that *a'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okahi, or all knowledge is not learned in one school*. Just as each student is a unique learner, so too are our communities, our families and each one of those who teach our keiki. We recognize and respect the differences of experiences, backgrounds and abilities of each of us and celebrate our successes, achievements and ability to innovate.

ACTIONS

The working group offers the following recommendations to teachers, the Hawai'i Department of Education, the University of Hawai'i and the Hawai'i State Legislature, as well as others with the power to act on them. Short- and long-term recommendations for action are offered in the full report.

- 1) Start at the youngest ages, as early as pre-K and Kindergarten, to develop an attitude of Aloha in each classroom.
- 2) Nurture and sustain teachers across all grade levels to utilize culture-based curricula that have relevance to students and to their communities.
- 3) Identify resources in each individual community that can enhance curricula in all academic areas, both core and non-core.
- 4) Collaborate with local Hawaiian communities and organizations to provide professional development opportunities for teachers to help them make meaningful connections to Hawaiian culture for themselves and for their students.
- 5) Develop proactive community and parent-involvement programs that allow parents to participate in and be advocates for their children's education in ways that are positive and meaningful to parents, children and teachers.
- 6) Celebrate student success to the highest degree possible; focus on success rather than student "deficits."
- 7) Link culture-based academic education to career development and vocational opportunities from the elementary school level on through high school.
- 8) Actively support the use of the community as a classroom by encouraging placed-based learning, reflection and assessment.
- 9) Incorporate meaningful community service that empowers children to make a difference in their community's life.
- 10) Implement mentorship programs at all grade levels and for all learners, including mentoring for teachers as learners, both by their peers and by their students, student-to-student peer mentoring and kūpuna mentoring for teachers and students.