

NĀ LAU LAMA INDIGENOUS ASSESSMENT

PRELIMINARY WORKING GROUP FINDINGS



BACKGROUND

The Indigenous Assessment Working Group was comprised of 15 members coming from a wide variety of organizations and backgrounds. To accomplish this work, they drew from their collective personal and professional experiences, informal interviews with education and assessment professionals, current theoretical and research-based writings on indigenous assessment, and the mana’o of their colleagues through a series of assets-based interviews. Their recommendations are aligned with traditional Hawaiian epistemology and practices, however there are many points of intersection between these culturally-grounded approaches and current understandings of new research-based practices and paradigms.

The Working Group ultimately decided that they could best contribute to the overall Nā Lau Lama goals by focusing on classroom assessment with an emphasis on the following three priorities:

- 1) To identify research-based, culturally-appropriate approaches to diverse forms of assessment in education for Native Hawaiian learners that:
 - Involve meaningful performances, including those that are place-based and community-based
 - Are culturally appropriate in format and delivery
 - Give feedback that can recursively inform instruction and learning in a frequent, timely way
 - Provide evidence of progress in globally-valued academic skills and content, as well as in locally valued knowledge, skills and dispositions.
- 2) To encourage implementation of multiple and diverse forms of such assessments; and,
- 3) To advocate for recognition of such assessments as important measures and evidence of student achievement.

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

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

Diversify classroom assessments for students.

Each type of assessment benefits the teacher and prepares students to respond in a variety of ways allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple contexts (see Figure 1).

Assessments should provide evidence of progress in globally-valued academic skills and content, as well as locally-valued knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

Frequently use formative and other contextualized assessments.

These types of assessments are designed to evaluate criteria established by the teacher and inform the teacher of the student's understanding of the material being taught. By reviewing these assessments, teachers have an opportunity to modify their instruction to meet student needs. Formative assessments also give students appropriate, contextualized feedback to make improvements.

Use assessments that are culturally appropriate in format *and* delivery.

Ho'ike, literally a demonstration of learning, is a powerful assessment tool that is based on a meaningful task delivered to an authentic audience.

If teaching and learning is in the Hawaiian language, assessments should be given in the language of instruction.

Take a strengths-based approach with learners, building upon their abilities and their growth.

Students will be able to experience success when priority is placed on individual growth and the internalization of standards of excellence.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The working group suggests that Hawaiian culture-based assessment is characterized by the following attributes:

Kūlia i ka nu‘u (Strive to reach the highest): The pursuit and achievement of attaining the best possible outcome and working towards excellence is important in a Hawaiian context. Within Hawaiian culture, based on a deep understanding of interdependence and mutual respect, excellence is characteristic of a particular performance or product and not a result of a competition (that is, excellence reflects individual and collective achievement, rather than "besting" someone else).

E kuahui like i ka hana (Let everybody pitch in and work together): Assessment is strengths-based, respectful and constructive, looking for the particular attributes, contributions and potentials of the individuals or groups assessed, with particular emphasis on how they contribute to the larger community. Implicit in this is a respect for the “funds of knowledge” of students and their communities; consistent with this attribute is an emphasis on growth and continuous improvement that results from diligent effort.

Ma ka hana ka ‘ike (In working, one learns): Assessment is personal in that it is appropriate to a particular individual, place and time. There is an emphasis on engagement as well as application of knowledge and skills in authentic ways.

I ka nā nānō a ‘ike (By observing, one learns): Creating the ambiance, i.e., the appropriate conditions such as time and place, for focused observation and reflective dialogue promotes mindful learning as an internal and external form of assessing the levels of engagement, processing and application.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The working group suggests the following principles for use when designing or selecting assessments:

... the purposes for the assessment include:

1. creation of shared meanings and clear expectations that increase understanding and build relationships between teachers and learners,
2. identification of learners' strengths and support of teachers' efforts to build on those strengths,
3. authentic opportunities to explore learners' roles and function within a community (as in stewardship, citizenship, service learning).

... the design and content of the assessments incorporate:

4. methods that are aligned with the curriculum, language of instruction, and pedagogy,
5. a diverse range of approaches, tools, methods and venues that allow learners to demonstrate their knowledge in multiple contexts,
6. culturally-grounded practices such as ho‘ike and intergenerational participation,
7. indigenous knowledge systems that span families, generations, and communities, and,
8. consideration of all dimensions of the learner's development - the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual.

... the assessment is conducted in a context where:

9. relationships are sustained over time and include high levels of mutual respect and trust,
10. connections are explicitly made between the knowledge assessed, the learners' past experiences and the future path of the learner/community,
11. the learners' roles in and relationships to the knowledge studied (kuleana) are recognized in addition to the content itself, and,
12. the assessors accept responsibility for using culturally-appropriate methods, and for using the data in a community-sensitive manner.

... the assessment results are used in a way that:

13. informs the structure and content of next steps and future learning experiences (i.e., "formative" assessment, differentiation, recursive data use, etc.),
14. empowers learners and increases their opportunities for success,
15. improves the situation and conditions for the learner as well as the community; and,
16. gives the indigenous community control over interpretation of results and of how findings are reported within the community and beyond.

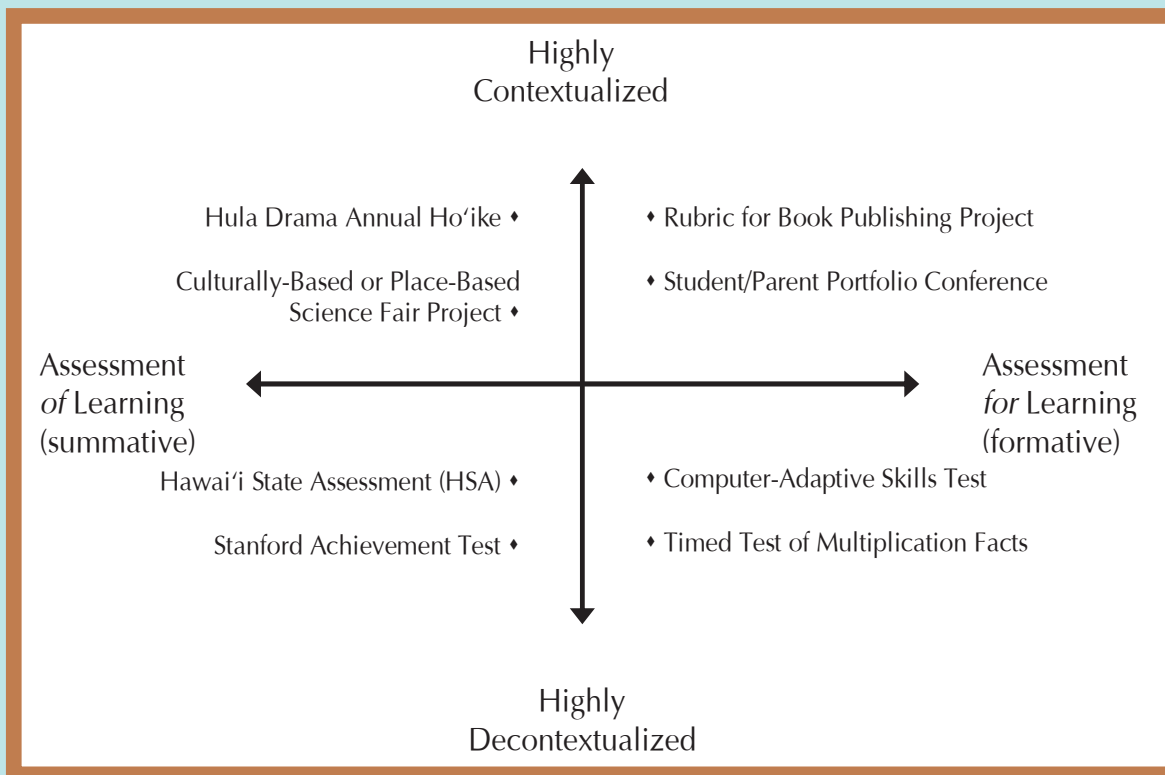


Figure 1. Mapping of assessment tools by contextualization and purpose.

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:

1. Provide an orientation on indigenous assessment for administrators, principals and teachers (Design Principles 1, 2).
2. Require coursework in Hawaiian culture and language for all public school teachers (Design Principle 7).
3. Require a geographic, demographic, socioeconomic and cultural orientation for all teachers to the specific communities in which they teach (Design Principles 2, 3, 11).
4. Collect and publish (via the internet) a set of assessment tools and methods that may be used in alignment with the guiding principles (Design Principles 4, 5, 6, 8).
5. Compile case studies of context-rich examples to serve as models of indigenous assessment for educators and administrators (Design Principles 4-8).
6. Collaborate with the Teacher Education Coordinating Committee (TECC) to ensure pre- and in-service courses in assessment design and methodology are required for teacher certification and require the inclusion of information on indigenous and culturally-based assessment as part of those courses (Design Principles 4, 5, 12, 13).
7. Convene a task force to work with the DOE Evaluation department to identify ways to include indigenous assessment in the HSA (Design Principles 1, 3, 13, 14).
8. Develop multiple alternatives to Hawai'i State Assessment (HSA) to permit demonstration of standards proficiency in diverse ways, e.g., portfolio and authentic performance-based assessments (Design Principles 5, 14, 15).
9. Incorporate Nā Honua Maoli Ola Guidelines into the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards (HCPS) (Design Principles 7, 8, 13).
 - a. Short-term: Develop alternative benchmarks with accompanying sample performance assessments and rubrics across content areas in the HCPS that incorporate Nā Honua Maoli Ola Guidelines.
 - b. Long-term: Develop a comprehensive culture-based educational strand within the HCPS that incorporates Nā Honua Maoli Ola Guidelines.
10. Develop a long-term, system-wide strategy for implementing additional assessments (multiple, frequent, diverse) that complement the HSA and provide critical information that guides classroom instruction (Design Principles 2, 5, 15, 16).