

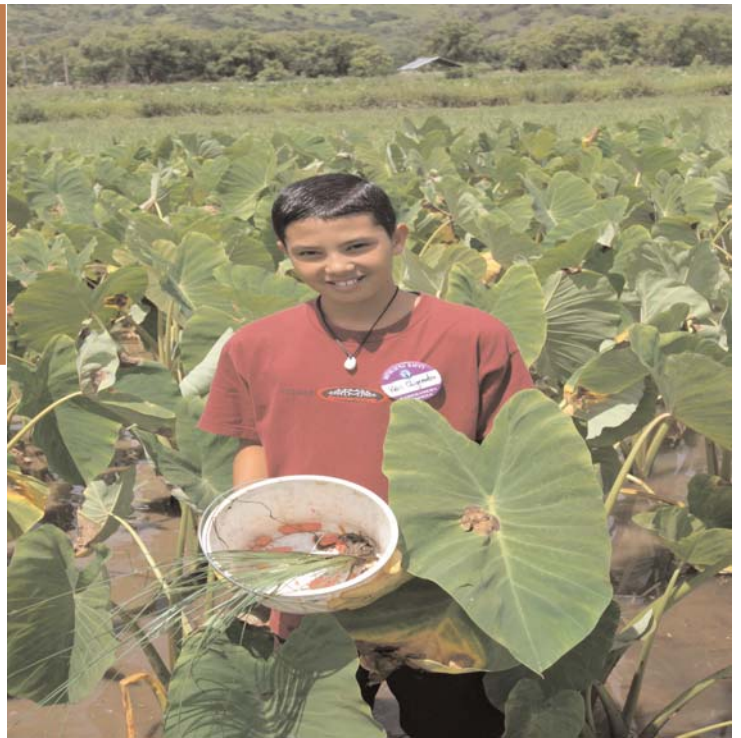
**NĀ LAU LAMA
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES
AND COMMUNITIES
PRELIMINARY
WORKING GROUP FINDINGS**

BACKGROUND

The Strengthening Families and Communities working group of Nā Lau Lama represents a gathering of people who work every day with Hawaiian families in Hawaiian communities. This group of dedicated people know firsthand the incredible strength of our Hawaiian families and the spirit of resilience that Hawaiian communities possess. With this in mind, the working group wanted to articulate how to harness the existing energy of Hawaiian families and communities in order to improve educational outcomes, not just for Hawaiian haumāna, but for the betterment of our state and our lāhui.

Instead of investigating practices and models, they soon discovered that their work would be truer to their convictions, if instead they focused on their own experiences and the work they do daily with Hawaiian families and communities, including their own 'ohana. Using the Appreciative Inquiry process, they collected and shared stories of strength, personal growth and positive academic outcomes from the Hawaiian communities in which they work. As they shared stories of Hawaiian strength and resilience, often in the face of poverty and always in the context of a struggle for cultural survival, the working group identified factors that linked their stories to positive outcomes. What they found was a set of guiding principles, values that our kūpuna knew and practiced in their daily lives. These values continue, to this day, to be the foundation of Hawaiian culture.

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



SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

Seek opportunities to collaborate with families and the community in educational efforts.

A child's first teachers are their 'ohana. Collaborative efforts encourage educational programs to understand and value a child's family and community.

Create a safe environment where families feel welcome to share their mana'o.

Be an active listener and encourage parental involvement by acknowledging the parent's role as a partner in their child's academic development.

Create educational programs that make Hawaiian culture and values primary to the curriculum.

In order to create a meaningful and relevant environment where families and communities feel welcome, Hawaiian culture and values should be made primary in the development of programs.

Share stories of personal and academic success that reinforce Hawaiian values.

These empowering mo'olelo inspire and affirm strengths in our families and keiki. Listening to successful stories about Hawaiians helps to instill a strong sense of cultural identity and self-worth.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The working group suggests that you consider the following 'ōlelo no'eau when designing programs:

Aia ke ola i ka hale - Life is in the home

Our kūpuna knew that parents and family are children's first teachers. To properly educate a Hawaiian child, one must consider the role of that child's family and their surrounding community. In the days of our kūpuna, most Hawaiian families lived in kauhale, the clusters of individual hale in which those tasks necessary to sustain and nurture the family were carried out. These kauhale also were our ancient institutions of education. Young girls and boys were educated by the women in the Hale 'Āina. Older boys and young men received their education in the Hale Mua, while older girls learned about womanhood in the Hale Pe'a. It was in kauhale that our ancestors learned various specialized skills, akin to the ways contemporary vocational schools or other institutions of higher learning teach them today.

E kolo ana no ke ēwe i ke ēwe - The rootlet will creep towards the rootlet

Because they are of the same origin, children will seek out and learn from their family and community first. To our kūpuna, family and community were the beginnings, the foundations of education. In many ways, education is no different today. Values, beliefs and patterns begin forming at home. Family and community are critical components of education for all children, not just Hawaiians.

ACTIONS

The working group offers the following recommendations to community program developers, service providers and teachers in the community.

- 1) **Focus on the Family**
 - Tailor program to families' needs, be family/child focused;
 - Use multi-generational approaches that include keiki, mākua and kūpuna;
 - Encourage collaboration between families and program staff;
 - Remember that families are their children's first teachers.
- 2) **Focus on the Culture**
 - Use cultural concepts and activities to support Hawaiian identity;
 - Create safe environments for both children and their families by using values of aloha and mālama.
- 3) **Focus on the Community**
 - Share success by helping other programs replicate it in their communities;
 - Address diversity among Hawaiians and non-Hawaiians in your program, including addressing multiple ethnicities, economics and geography;
 - Encourage the leadership of Hawaiian families and individuals in community programs and activities, even where such leadership may not be readily obvious.
- 4) **Focus on Values**
 - Be unflinchingly honest, especially when things are not working;
 - Clearly state your purpose and goals, know what "success" means for your program as well as its participating families and communities;
 - Stick to the basics, make sure both your program and assessment designs are based on the fundamentals of Hawaiian culture and values;
 - Pass on the traditions and values of Hawaiian culture.