

HAWAIIAN
CULTURE-BASED
LEARNING





Hawaiian Culture-Based Learning

A majority of Roosevelt High School’s student population is consistently comprised of about 20% each for Chinese, Japanese, and Native Hawaiian students. When the achievement data of these subgroups are compared, Native Hawaiian students are not performing at the same level as the other two largest sub groups. The question is, why are all of these students who are mixed into various courses on campus, performing at very different levels? A possible answer is the current curriculum approaches are not engaging all students. The challenge is to find something to engage this group of students in a class that will help them gain confidence and skills to succeed in other classes. The Hawaiian culture-based course is a possible curriculum solution.

“ Help students gain confidence
and skills to succeed.”



The project-based learning class was developed through a partnership with Kamehameha Schools that provided a valuable resource through the knowledge of Kumu in Residence, Earl Kawa‘a.

The co-teachers from Roosevelt High School were willing to explore new teaching strategies and assist in implementing a project-based hands-on course that also emphasized group, leadership, presentation, and basic Hawaiian language skills.

The results were promising in the following ways:

Grades Were Higher

Compared to other classes

Attendance Was Higher

Compared to other classes

Increased Confidence

Some students decided they would go to college upon graduation and enrolled in early college and AP classes

Adult Interaction Improved

Increase in comfort level with interacting with adults improved

Oral Presentation Skills

Increase in confidence in giving an oral presentation




Visit HawaiianLearning.com and watch the “About Our Curriculum” Video. This video documents some of the methodologies utilized in this course that can be incorporated into other classrooms.



About Our Curriculum

In the Hawaiian methodology curriculum practiced in this video there is a focus on *Ho'olaka*, the concept of ensuring that students are in a safe environment physically and intellectually for optimal learning to occur. The three practices demonstrated in the project-based classroom at Roosevelt High School that promote *Ho'olaka* are *Mo'olelo*, *'Ōlelo Hou*, and *Hō'upu*.



Ho'olaka

Setting the Environment

Mo'olelo

Storytelling

'Ōlelo Hou

Repetition Review Reflection

Hō'upu

Prepare Students

Hō'ike

Celebrate Accomplishments



Ho‘olaka

Translation: To calm the brain

As students move from class to class throughout their day, so many things could be on their minds from home, with their friends in school, or even a previous class. The methodology of *Ho‘olaka* is used to help students settle-in for class. Depending on what a student is going through personally and academically, it is difficult to function successfully in an academic setting without them feeling safe and prepared for the work ahead of them. *Ho‘olaka* could include tapping into prior knowledge, a review of a previous day’s work, setting the scene for what is to come, or even a daily *‘oli* that helps students leave what is happening in their lives outside the classroom as much as possible during that instructional time.

Ho‘olaka is not something that occurs only at the beginning of class. It happens throughout the class as *kumu* encourage students with their work, help prepare them for tests, or ask them to answer questions. It is setting up a safe environment for students from the beginning to end of class in which they trust that their teacher is on their side and there to support their academic success. It means that it’s okay to ask questions, to ask for help, to make suggestions, to try a new approach and explain it without shame or fear of “having the wrong answer.” One student said it best when she described the classroom as a place where *kumu* and students learn from each other.



Reflection

What might students have experienced that would not enable them to feel intellectually safe in a classroom?

What practices would promote ho‘olaka in classrooms?



Mo'olelo

Translation: Storytelling

The practice of *Mo'olelo* is used to entertain, give relevance, or capture attention directed to the topic of the day. It can also be utilized to focus on soft skills that the *kumu* want students to develop. For example, the *kumu* may tell a story that illustrated someone's tenacity in order to think about their own ability to see a project through. When using *Mo'olelo*, the tone of the voice should shift from lecturer to storyteller. It can also be seen as a method for *ho'olaka* as it takes students through a journey that allows them to center on the task at hand. A story can also *hō'upu* students for an upcoming task. Lastly, a *mo'olelo* shared from *kumu* to student builds relationships as students learn more about the personal life of their *kumu*.



Reflection

Think of a possible mo'olelo that would help your students focus on leadership.

Note: You may draw from historical figures; not all mo'olelo need to draw from personal experience.

What types of stories could be incorporated into classrooms to help students engage with the topic at hand?



‘Ōlelo Hou

Translation: Repetition, Review, Reflection

Native Hawaiian culture has been preserved through an oral tradition that has been passed down through generations. The practice of ‘*Ōlelo Hou* was utilized to enable students to memorize and internalize information. In the project-based class at Roosevelt, ‘*Ōlelo Hou* is evident in the start of class, the end of class, and during testing. *Kumu* repeat information and provide upcoming information to keep students informed about what has happened and what will happen. Tests are formatted so that students are assessed on chunks of information and then as that information is retested and retained by students, additional items are added to the test. For example, 10 vocabulary words may be on the test for a few weeks. Once it is clear that certain words are known by students, those words will be removed from the weekly test and 5 new words are added. With this method students have an opportunity to learn at their own pace and the repetition helps all students retain information. This strategy can also be seen as *ho‘olaka* as it calms the brain so that students are not overly anxious about a high-stakes test that provides only one opportunity to learn.

Reflection is also an important piece of learning. When students have an opportunity to reflect, they gain more understanding of their progress as a learner. If students don’t pause to share their insights on the outcome of a presentation, or their goals on a project, they don’t take the time to notice their own accomplishments nor do they set goals for success. Reflection in this project-based class is accomplished through whole class discussions, groups, and individually through reflection logs.



Reflection

Describe instances in which repetition is a required part of learning?

In order to capitalize on its benefits, how might repetition be incorporated into the classroom environment?



Hō‘upu

Translation: Implant Ideas; Thoughts

The concept of *Hō‘upu* is used to prepare students for what will come in future lessons. The goal is to not have surprises that will cause students to lose confidence in themselves. Whether it is an upcoming component of a project, a field trip, or a test, students know ahead of time what to expect. In this sense *Hō‘upu* is another form of *ho‘olaka*, or to calm the brain. Processes are explained with the simple phrase “and you will be...” and “you can do it.” Information is given in chunks to entice and motivate students for what is to come. A full explanation is provided as the lesson or event draws closer. Each time it is explained it is refined to become clearer to students.



Reflection

What examples of *hō‘upu* are present in many classrooms?

How might a teacher increase opportunities to *hō‘upu* students?



Hō‘ike

Translation: To Make Known

In Roosevelt’s project-based class students planned and participated in a *Hō‘ike* at the end of each semester. It is a celebration of the students’ accomplishments for the semester in which student work is displayed and students present to family, friends, faculty and invited guests. It is an opportunity for students and teachers to take pride in their accomplishments. Oftentimes, we do not take the time to celebrate the tenacity and collaboration needed to complete a project beyond a letter grade. *Hō‘ike* not only provides an opportunity for celebration, it provides an opportunity for students to present to an authentic audience and to reflect upon the successes and challenges along the way.



Reflection

When have you seen an example of hō‘ike in your school setting?

What opportunities might there be for students to experience a hō‘ike from the largest to smallest scale?