

Contextualized Learning

“contextualizing teaching and learning promotes the richness and respect of difference within school communities”

PREL values the contexts and cultures in which teaching and learning take place, recognizing that people learn more effectively when they are learning about something they are interested in, already know something about, and that affords them the opportunity to use what they already know to figure out new things. This place-based approach to teaching and learning is what frames PREL’s work with schools. How do we do this? We work closely with Pacific educators to address unique aspects of place that impact learning, from multi-grade bilingual classrooms in remote and isolated indigenous communities to multi-lingual classrooms in urban areas where students learn in English. PREL views contextualizing teaching and learning as fundamental to our work and promotes the richness and respect of difference within school communities and across the curriculum.

PREL works with teachers, administrators, and decision makers to promote and extend place-based programs, including those with an indigenous focus geared toward maintaining language, traditions, and knowledge. Such indigenous efforts realize that a strong “sense of place” facilitates the health and wholeness of the individual, family, and community and leads to transformative change. PREL supports these efforts through curriculum redesigns, teacher education, and culturally appropriate strategies that honor community and place. In fact, many of PREL’s staff live in the Pacific region and belong to the place in which they reside. Their local knowledge of language and traditions is used to support a more holistic approach to education that is aligned with the culture and language of the communities in which schooling takes place. PREL staff value indigenous ways and work collaboratively with local educators to re-think research and universal best practices to ensure a good fit. Some of the work that PREL does in the area of Contextualized Learning follows.



E Ho’omau!

E Ho’omau! strives to improve the academic literacy skills of students of Hawaiian ancestry. It integrates evidence-based educational approaches with a visually-rich learning system based on Hawaiian legends, designed to be highly motivational and culturally appropriate. The familiar legends of Māui, Pele, and the Menehune are the basis of animated short movies that will be accompanied by a graphic novel or lavishly illustrated fictional book, as well as a set of non-fiction booklets containing important vocabulary words.

The project began in September 2009, and staff are currently immersed in the intricate process of producing the animated short featurettes and the supporting curriculum materials. Producing the supporting non-fiction materials has involved deciding upon the themes, identifying appropriate science content, and integrating literacy development strategies, as well as researching and writing the narratives.

Picturing Science

Picturing Science is an instructional approach that enables teachers to integrate their science instruction with art, technology, and writing, emphasizing issues of the local environment and culture. The final result is a showcase of student images and words that tie into the science units studied in the classroom that are often Web-based. Picturing Science continues to train educators (476 in 2009) at the Honolulu Zoo, the Waikiki Aquarium, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, Hanauma Bay, and other community- and science-oriented organizations.



Te Taki Tokelau

PREL is assisting Te Taki Tokelau Community Training and Development, Inc. with 1 year of professional development services to Te Lumanaki staff about classroom management and instruction and curriculum development. This effort promotes learning of the Tokelauan language and culture in out-of-school classes. In October 2009, PREL staff met with the director, seven teachers, and 14 students of the Te Taki Tokelau Community for initial introductions and a needs assessment. Curriculum design was the focus of the first session; other topics will be addressed in 2010.

Equity Assistance Center (EAC)

PREL partners with Education Northwest to carry out the work of the Region X EAC in the Pacific. This effort is designed to address the seven key components of education equity (KCEE): access, instruction, materials, attitudes, assessment, interactions, and language. The EAC helps public schools and communities incorporate educational equity into policies and practices. Training and technical assistance is provided on issues related to equity in education to ensure that all children, regardless of race, gender, or national origin, have equal access to quality education and the opportunity to develop high academic standards in reading, language arts, math, and other core subjects.

The EAC holds an annual Pacific Equity Academy where all cadre members attend for basic understanding of educational equity, strategies, and frameworks to address equity concerns, and professional development to improve skills and knowledge of equity specialists. The first Pacific Equity Academy was held

Mathematics and Culture in Micronesia: Integrating Societal Experiences (Project MACIMISE)

In order to support educators, families, and communities in developing place-based approaches to teaching and learning, Project MACIMISE offers master's and doctorate degrees in mathematics, while enhancing the opportunity for children to learn significant indigenous mathematics using materials developed by indigenous informants who are degree-seeking mathematics educators and implemented by teachers mentored in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. This project is carried out in partnership with the College of Education at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

in May 2009. This was the first phase of the equity work and focused on building the capacity of the cadre. The second equity academy will be held in January 2010 and will focus on extensive review of the KCEEs and the six forms of bias: exclusion or invisibility, stereotyping, imbalance or selectivity, fragmentation or isolation, unreality, and linguistic bias.