

Hawai'i Schools Take Advantage of PREL's School Improvement

By Lori Phillips, EdD

Even in the face of fiscal austerity, professional development (PD) to create highly qualified teachers is critical. Successful schools are savvy to the importance of professional learning and are finding creative ways to support teacher development. This year, Hawai'i's schools decided to focus on the horizon by offering their educators PD in many areas. They realize knowledge is power and that lifelong learners weather the storm.

PREL has completed 1 year of service in Hawai'i schools as a school improvement services (SIS) provider. Nearly 800 educators benefited from various PREL PD courses. PREL staff observed each teacher in the classroom at least twice; met for additional PD, coaching, and portfolio development; and was able to offer 140 teachers PD3 Department of Education credit.

Many of PREL's courses focus on English as a second language (ESL) teaching strategies. PREL also specializes in culturally responsive work with the Micronesian student population. Following are just some of the courses offered through the SIS program.

Reading in the Early Grades

(K–3 teachers, reading specialists)
Participants explore the processes that build skills and foster a desire to read among young learners.

Writing in the Early Grades

(PreK–3 teachers, language arts specialists)
Participants explore the developmental stages of young writers and different techniques to improve their writing skills. Participants also learn how to create new and exciting lessons aligned to the Hawai'i Content & Performance Standards Assessments, which are correlated to each lesson, enabling participants to analyze student samples to inform their instruction.

Reading in the Middle Years

(4–8 teachers, reading specialists)
Participants explore concepts and strategies that support striving readers, including English language learners (ELLs), across the curriculum. Special attention is given to vocabulary and key comprehension strategies for informational texts found in science and social studies classrooms.

Image to Word – Word to Image

(K–12 teachers)
By integrating art, language arts, and technology with content areas, participants learn to create personally and culturally relevant images for students to stimulate their reading, build their vocabulary, and improve their comprehension and descriptive writing. Observational drawing is used to develop academic and foundational vocabulary. This process results in rich, descriptive images and words that help students use new vocabulary in their writing.

Standards-Based Arts Education

(K–12 teachers)
Participants learn about standards-based arts education and design lessons that offer students a comprehensive arts education curriculum.

English Language Learners in Content Areas

(4–12 teachers, school-based specialists)
In a module geared toward teachers of newly arrived ELLs and those not yet proficient in English, participants learn about instructional strategies for language development that support content learning.

Culturally Responsive Sheltered Instruction for English Language Learners

(K–12 teachers)
Participants learn the SIOP model, which emphasizes making content comprehensible for ELLs.

Language-Focused Mathematics

(K–12 teachers, math teachers, math specialists)
This module focuses on the language needs of students who are learning mathematics in a language other than their first language. Participants also examine how to support native speakers of English to better understand the language and content of mathematics.

Integrated English, Science, and Mathematics

(K–8 teachers, school-based specialists)
This module focuses on a core set of integrated English, science, and mathematics activities that improve learning for all students.

Picturing Science

(K–12 teachers)
Observational drawing is used to develop academic and foundational vocabulary. This process allows students to express what they know and have learned in a content area using alternative methods. The end product is a Web-based student showcase of written and artistic work.

Picturing Science: Just One of PREL's Many School Improvement Offerings

In 2009, Picturing Science offered hundreds of educators in places such as the Monterey Aquarium, the Honolulu Zoo, Hanauma Bay, and the Maui Arts & Cultural Center the opportunity to show what they know about the natural world through art and descriptive writing using their bodies, observational skills, and technology. Whether studying sea horses at the aquarium, flamingos at the zoo, or the Maui wetlands, participants discovered science is everywhere!

Building science literacy through Picturing Science offers a process of learning in a real world context and involves students in creatively develop-

Professional Development Services (PDS)

"I have taken many professional development courses and feel Picturing Science tied the entire content integration picture together. It gave me the bigger picture of how to utilize the arts and language in my classroom to teach content. Life changing in so many ways: professionally and personally."

ing and testing new ideas. The integration of science with language and visual arts targets the whole brain. Learning in the arts mirrors the goals of scientific literacy by seeking to engage students in both intuitive and analytical thinking.

According to Pink (2006), the conceptual age in which we are living requires a new kind of thinking. This 21st century literacy requires synthesis of information, patterns, and concepts; incorporation of multiple perspectives; and the ability to create meaning from words, symbols and images. These skills, which are built through the arts, are the same as those sought by scientists.

The Picturing Science project, developed by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), combines scientific inquiry with language and visual literacy strategies to enhance environmental literacy. Picturing Science integrates science,

photography, drawing, painting, and writing to create a showcase of student work. The goals are for students to look at their environment from new perspectives and to engage creatively with scientific process and content. For additional information, go to www.prel.org/picturing-science

Picturing Science provides an engaging, multi-disciplinary model of instruction that can foster meaningful science understanding. By combining instructional strategies that engage the whole brain, we put science into a more complete human perspective. The thematic nature of the model demonstrates how multiple ways of thinking can contribute to answering essential science questions. By bringing together art and science, creativity and intuitive thinking combine with evidence-based analytical thinking. Skills are used in both endeavors to their mutual benefit.



Ignorance

By Joanna Schiller, Honaunau School

Razor-like spines on a protruding stalk slice into the sky like a siren into silence. Waihe'e wetlands is home not to an overabundance of non-native species such as this spiny specimen. To an uneducated visitor it is hard to know if a species is a friend or foe to the wetlands. What is clear is that the 28-acre wetlands are home to a large numbers of endangered species of animals and plants, creatures that depend exclusively on this habitat. Invasive plants are choking out the habitat for native birds. Archaeological sites at the refuge are a testament to the importance of this place in the history and culture of Maui, as well. Much still remains to restore this wetland habitat and preserve it for future generations. Will you sound your siren in aid of the wetlands or will you stand by in silence?

For further information about PREL's professional development courses and technical assistance opportunities, contact Lori Phillips, EdD, Director, Pacific Center for the Arts & Humanities in Education, PREL, at phillipl@prel.org or call (808) 441-1340.

These images show the Picturing Science process from the field to the classroom. Images and writing created at Maui Arts & Cultural Center workshop 2009.

Photo by Javier Elizondo

Photos by Bob Bangert