

# The ACIE Newsletter

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## Top Ten Reasons For Becoming An Immersion Teacher of An Indigenous Language

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*I ka 'lelo no ke ola, i ka 'lelo no ka make.*

(In language there is life, in language there is death.)

**T**he ability to sustain or revitalize a native language as a vibrant and living language is increased greatly by the availability of immersion schools. Qualified teachers who are fluent in the language are essential for insuring school success through the target language.

In 1983, there were fewer than fifty children under the age of eighteen fluent in the Hawaiian language. The inception of the Pūnana Leo preschools in 1984, and then the Papahana Kaiapuni K-12 immersion schools in 1987 has played a central role in the revitalization of the Hawaiian language.

Teachers who are fluent in the language and prepared to teach within an immersion setting contribute to the academic success factor and fluency of the students through Hawaiian. The year 2007 marks the twentieth anniversary of Hawaiian immersion education within the public sector. Some thirty-four schools with an enrollment of about 2,000 students are now available statewide from preschool to grade twelve.



Na'ilima Gaison teaches Kindergarten at Nawahiokalani'opu'u Hawaiian Language Immersion School

The immersion approach is also being used in higher education from the undergraduate through doctorate level. Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'eliklani College of Hawaiian Language at the University of Hawai'i offers multiple degrees conducted through Hawaiian. Building educational models and enhancing environments where Hawaiian language thrives as the language of communication, business and education further contribute to the presence of Hawaiian as a living language.

The Kahuawaiola Indigenous Teacher Education Program is preparing a new generation of educators. This culture-based education program builds upon a record of Hawaiian language education success and

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*This Top Ten list is numbered in Hawai'ian.*

## *Indigenous Language Teaching, continued from page 1*

traditional knowledge crucial for insuring the continuation of the Hawaiian language and culture.

Here's why becoming an immersion teacher of an indigenous language is such an exciting and rewarding endeavor:

‘EKAHI (1)

Being part of the revival of a native language once on the brink of extinction.

‘ELUA (2)

Passing on the gift of language and culture through education.

‘EKOLU (3)

Enhancing the cognitive abilities of your students through acquisition of a new language.

‘EHA (4)

Raising the educational statistics and success rate of native students by addressing high standards of cultural, linguistic and academic competency.

‘ELIMA (5)

Teaching children whose families are active participants in the educational process and vision.

‘EONO (6)

Becoming a valuable cultural resource to your students, family and community as a keeper of the fire.

‘EHIKU (7)

Fostering cultural identity and a sense of belonging that promotes healthy well-being.

‘EWALU (8)

Educating the whole child through culturally congruent processes that help students build upon their life experiences.

‘EIWA (9)

Becoming an active practitioner of an indigenous language and culture. (Living through the language and being with the culture.)

‘UMI (10)

Helping students to walk within a multilingual world and to see through diverse cultural perspectives. ○



*Ku'ulei Alcomindras-Palakiko teaches Kindergarten-first grade Hawaiian language immersion students.*