

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

I ka 'ōlelo no ke ola, i ka 'ōlelo no ka make
(In language there is life, in language there is death).

The 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 less 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 vital 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 are now available statewide from grades preschool to grade twelve with an enrollment of about 2,000 students.

The immersion methodology is also being used within higher education from the bachelors through doctorate level. Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani 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.

A new generation of educators prepared to teach upon a cultural foundation and through the Hawaiian language is available through the Kahuawaiola Indigenous Teacher Education Program. This culture-based education program builds upon a generation of Hawaiian language education success and traditional knowledge crucial for insuring the continuation of the Hawaiian language and culture.

This top ten list provides several reasons why becoming an immersion teacher of an indigenous language is such an exciting and rewarding field.

1. The opportunity to be part of revitalizing a native language from the brink of extinction.
2. Passing on the gift of language and culture through education.
3. Raising the educational statistics and success rate of native students by addressing high standards of cultural, linguistic and academic competency.
4. Fostering cultural identity and a sense of belonging that promotes healthy well-being.
5. Educating the whole child through culturally responsive processes that help

- students build upon their life experiences.
6. Helping students to see and walk within a multilingual world and through diverse cultural perspectives.
 7. Enhancing the cognitive abilities of your students through acquisition of a new language.
 8. Becoming a valuable cultural resource to your students, family and community as a keeper of the fire.
 9. Teaching children whose families are active participants in the educational process and vision.
 10. Becoming an active practitioner of an indigenous language and culture. (Living through the language and being with the culture)

Bio

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