

NATIVE HAWAIIAN SAFE AND DRUG-FREE

Providing Culturally Appropriate Prevention Education

By Sonja Evensen

Preventing substance abuse and violence among Native Hawaiian youth is a formidable task. PREL's Native Hawaiian Safe and Drug-Free (NHSDF) program works with both school and community partners to provide substance abuse/violence prevention services to Hawaiian communities that need them. In our 15 years of existence, NHSDF has developed an approach that incorporates culturally appropriate methodology for prevention education for Native Hawaiians.

While risk and protective factors are the same across cultures, appropriate delivery style is not. Native Hawaiian and traditional Western learning styles differ in a number of ways. These include preferred learning settings and contexts, teacher and student roles, and lesson delivery methods (see table). Prevention education messages for Native Hawaiians should emphasize group work, hands-on activities, and experiential learning opportunities.

Communication style is also important. Prevention materials are more effective when they reflect the communication style of the home community. Substance abuse/violence prevention programs can engage students by using familiar expressions and local humor. For example, in the *Be Akamai* series produced at Kamehameha Schools, charac-

ters are Hawaiian or mixed-ethnic in appearance, dress in a local style, and speak dialogue sprinkled with pidgin and Hawaiian terms. Story situations include familiar events (like *luau* or beach activities) and emphasize values that speak to a local audience (like *‘ohana* and *aloha*). In the example at right taken from “Be Akamai About Violence,” the scenery, characters, and language are all familiar to the target audience.

In shaping your own classroom practices and/or prevention education messages, be careful to avoid ethnic stereotypes such as “fat” and “lazy” and labels such as “chick.” It’s important to understand the priorities of your target audience. In messages for youth, for example, remember that they may care more about pimples than brain damage.

The key to successful prevention educa-



Art: Reprint courtesy of Kamehameha Schools.

▷ Effective prevention materials like *Be Akamai* connect with local culture.

tion is to reach members of the target audience where they are with a message that is relevant to them. Respecting culture, recognizing differences in learning styles, and employing content, language, and a style that appeals to your audience are key factors in ensuring that the message comes across loud and clear.

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Native Hawaiian Learning Styles

1. Preference for learning through interaction with peers/classmates
2. Preference for learning settings where group effort and group achievement are accepted
3. Preference where knowledge and skills are imparted through demonstrated and direct assistance
4. Preference for deriving general rules and principles from experience (inductive)
5. Preference for learning in the context of task completion rather than learning for the purpose of learning
6. Preference for learning in which both teacher and student participate in a common task

Traditional Classroom Practices

1. Learning occurs primarily through interaction with adults and teachers
2. Learning settings usually emphasize individual effort and achievement in competition
3. Knowledge and skills are imparted via verbal and other descriptive commentary
4. Teacher provides general rules from which students derive applications (deductive)
5. Learning often emphasizes instructional purposes
6. Teacher provides direction and guidance; hierarchical roles in the school and classroom maintained

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