

Content Assessment in the Native Language: Development of the Hawaiian Aligned Portfolio Assessment

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There was a time when education in Hawai'i was conducted exclusively in the native language. Since then, there have been many changes in state and federal policy. These policies have influenced the official language of the state, the language of instruction, and the language of assessment in Hawai'i.

In 1896, legislation was passed that prohibited education in Hawaiian. Student fluency in both written and oral Hawaiian dramatically declined in the following years. When the Hawai'i state constitution was amended in 1978, related legislation established Hawaiian, along with English, as an official language. Almost 10 years later, in 1986, the restriction against using the Hawaiian language in public schools was finally removed.

In 1988, the Hawai'i Department of Education (HIDOE) created the Hawaiian Language Immersion Program (HLIP). This program was developed to provide families the option of having their children educated in Hawaiian. The HLIP was initially piloted in two schools. As of 2007, the HLIP has grown to include 19 schools (regular and charter). The HLIP currently serves approximately 1,700 students in grades 1–12.

The HIDOE has had a well-developed assessment and reporting system in place for many years. However, prior to 2001 and implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), HLIP students through grade 5 were exempt from taking the Hawai'i State Assessment (HSA). The HSA had only one version, and it was written in English.

In an effort to comply with NCLB, the HSA was translated into Hawaiian. The Hawaiian translation of the HSA was administered in school year (SY) 2003–2004. In February 2005, the members of the assessment Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for the State of Hawai'i evaluated the Hawaiian version of the HSA and determined that it was not satisfactory as a measure of achievement for students in HLIP schools.

The first administration of the translated HSA revealed numerous difficulties often encountered when one language is translated into another. For example, the reading passages in Hawaiian were much longer and more difficult than the original English versions. As an alternative to the translated HSA, Hawai'i's TAC suggested the development of a structured portfolio assessment.

In 2005, the HIDOE commissioned a partnership among the HIDOE Student Assessment Section (SAS), HLIP teachers and administrators, and Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL), to create the Hawaiian Aligned Portfolio Assessment (HAPA). The structured portfolio concept was defined for the HAPA as a collection of work demonstrating student achievement on the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards (HCPS) III for reading and mathematics at grade levels 3 and 4.

The HAPA was piloted in fall 2005 with HLIP students one grade level above the target group (e.g., 4th grade students took the 3rd grade HAPA). Using data from the

pilot test, HAPA items were reviewed and revised by the partners in the early spring.

Every benchmark of the HCPS III for reading and mathematics at grade levels 3 and 4 is measured by the HAPA. The HAPA is given during the same testing window as the regular HSA. Rather than giving the entire test in a block of time, teachers schedule students to work on pieces of the portfolio as they see fit. There are approximately 13 reading items and 35 math items for each grade in the HAPA. All HAPA items are written in Hawaiian and require a constructed response. Student responses need to be in Hawaiian in order to be counted. Variations in the Hawaiian dialect are accommodated by teachers through language substitution before the items are distributed to students and during the scoring process.

The HAPA scoring center is conducted shortly after the testing window period. The scoring center is staffed by people fluent in Hawaiian. Scoring center participants have included the following: parents of HLIP students; native Hawaiian community members; and teachers from the HLIP program (public and charter schools), the University of Hawai'i (UH) at Mānoa, UH Hilo, and Kamehameha Schools. The scoring center is held on O'ahu, so participants travel by air to represent all five of the islands where the HAPA is administered.

To ensure reliability, items from the HAPA are scored by two independent scorers. The process of scoring,

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using criteria from the HCPS III, becomes valuable staff development for the HLIP teachers. Teachers learn how the HCPS III is related to student achievement on the HAPA. They also learn new or different Hawaiian words that are used to describe literary concepts and math terms. While teachers

cannot score work from their own schools, they see how students from other schools are responding to specific tasks.

After scoring, data from the HAPA are compiled and aggregated with the HSA data. Combined data are used for student report cards and school adequate yearly progress reports. The HAPA has fulfilled NCLB requirements for assessing HLIP students in grades 3 and 4 for the past 2 years (SY 2005–2006 and SY 2006–2007). Administration of the HAPA is also planned for SY 2007–2008.

The HAPA demonstrates the following improvements compared to the previous HSA: (a) the language used in

the assessment matches the language of instruction; (b) the structured portfolio accommodates the use of the various dialects of Hawaiian (e.g., Ni‘ihau, UH Hilo, UH Mānoa); and (c) the items and reading passages were originally written in Hawaiian, rather than translated from English. The HAPA represents a successful partnership between HIDOE, HLIP, and PREL to support the continued growth of the native Hawaiian language.

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