

*What's
Working in*

HAWAII'S SCHOOLS

Highlighting Practices Schools are Proud Of

Featuring

Transition



Focusing on our strengths is a proven way to build on them, a way to spark enthusiasm and plant the seeds of innovation, creation and collaboration. In this spirit the Center on Disability Studies contacted Student Service Coordinators that participated in the Interdisciplinary Disability and Diversity Studies Certificate Program and invited them to identify What's Working in their school. We asked that the chosen practice be an outgrowth of current research. What they shared demonstrates how individual schools have chosen to craft their unique approach to what the research tells us. These examples are not necessarily DOE endorsed, they do however reflect practices that each of these schools feels proud of and has identified as "What's Working" for them.

Transition



Transition is a way of life. Some transitions more than others, hold tremendous change and emotion for families and children. Schools are realizing that in order to ensure the greatest level of success for students, attention must be given to supporting students and families through the various transitions. Transitions range from those within a single day, from grade to grade, from special education settings to general education, from restrictive to least restrictive settings, or the changing of school communities. All students benefit from an increased awareness and focus on support through transitions, including students with special needs who may require well thought out, proactive planning to ensure successful change. Often times the little bit of “extra” time, support, skill building, and attention is all any student needs to stabilize and flourish in their new environment.

A successful and effective transition program is everybody’s responsibility. Schools must take the lead in evaluating the needs of their students and families, assess where their current programs and services have gaps, and then build a stakeholder/community planning council to design and implement transition programs at various levels of support from prevention, to early intervention and into more intensive needs or a system of care.

As you review these What’s Working practices, allow them to inspire you, to spark your imagination. Maybe something similar would work well in your school.



Campbell High School helps students successfully transition into high school by holding a regular transition meeting or **Talk Story** to help prevent students from falling through the cracks. Departments have a **Talk Story** with the counselors and SSCs to discuss incoming students and their needs, allowing the school to mobilize the services they will be providing and keep them consistent for the student throughout the transition. For the Special Education Department, this meeting is helpful because teachers come up with a list of incoming students and are able to discuss what those students need to succeed in school. Campbell High has found that by actively keeping tabs on students, they have alleviated the problem of students getting lost in the system. **Talk Stories** have improved the communication between the intermediate schools and Campbell High School, making it easier for the teachers at Campbell to begin the year knowing a student's strengths, weaknesses, and what interventions have worked in the past. Communication between parents and the school has also improved. Through a **Talk Story**, parents are able to meet administrators and counselors from the high school before their child transitions. Families know who they'll be working with at the high school level and can build relationships accordingly.

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Maunaloa Elementary has implemented a Positive Behavior Support system known as **Catch them Being Good**. The rationale behind this approach is a strengths-based perspective that reduces inappropriate behaviors by teaching appropriate behaviors and providing different contexts to put these techniques into practice. The school realized that transition periods were difficult for students and disruptions were prevalent. To deal with this problem, Moanaloa Elementary created the **Catch Them Being Good** program to support appropriate student behavior. In the early stages, the program rewarded those students that made a smooth transition from recess into class with a bracelet. Students could then earn an Icee with a certain number of bracelets. This practice was very successful and the school has since modified the program to focus on meeting classroom behavioral goals, encouraging students to work together for positive group behavior. The goals are based on a set of school-wide expectations, with teachers charting the number of disruptions during a given transition period. Once a class achieves a goal, the

students are rewarded with Icees. Classes that do exceptionally well can earn an additional recess period. In an attempt to make positive behavior supports individualized, Moanaloa has expanded the **Catch Them Being Good** program to other transition times during the day. When a teacher witnesses a student doing something positive such as acting responsibly or helping someone out, they immediately award that student with a coupon for the student store. This program has been effective in reducing the number of discipline referrals and suspensions at school by providing immediate gratification for positive behaviors and supporting the school's expectations of students.

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Kihei Elementary has created an **Early Speech Intervention** program aimed at meeting the needs of children in their community as they transition into Kindergarten. Many incoming students had no preschool experience or learned English as a second language. This created a problem where students with few language experiences had poor communication and social skills practice. Later problems developed as a result and led to high numbers of students being referred for special education in the second grade classrooms. The **Early Speech Intervention** takes a preventative approach that focuses on kindergarten classrooms as the prime year to make an impression on students. The school speech pathologist regularly prepares a 30-40 minute lesson for each kindergarten class to teach communication skills, listening skills that help students identify important information in verbal lessons and everyday conversation, and provides opportunities to practice appropriate responses and expressive language to decrease frustrated behaviors. A wonderful aspect of the **Early Speech Intervention** program is that the speech therapist is able to build a relationship with the students early on and maintains that bond throughout the child's school career. The therapist is able to pinpoint early problems such as a lisp without going through the SPED process and the process of early referral happens with someone who knows and has a history of working with the child. The teachers love the speech intervention and are positive about continuing the practice because they are able to pick up on speech techniques and work on those throughout the year. Although Kihei Elementary has several other programs in place, **Early Speech Intervention** has helped to reduce the number of kindergarten referrals from 3-4 a year to 0. By

reaching students at such a young age, interventions have helped to set students up for success and create a love for learning.

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Kea'au Elementary is a new elementary that previously encompassed both elementary and intermediate students. In the past, transition periods were filled with roaming students and a sense of chaos. To address this problem, Kea'au Elementary has placed **book bins** around campus. When students arrive in the morning, they are immediately directed toward their classroom to read as soon as they enter. The expectation that students pick a book and wait by their classrooms has also succeeded in directing students toward the class, readying them to learn, and promoting literacy. A highlight of the **book bins** is that it promotes reading for enjoyment. The students are allowed to pick any book to pass the time. This program also orients the students to the fact that their school is an institution of learning. This transition is aided by greeters. Students arrive with their families, are met at their car, and transition into reading and the school setting. The staff promotes student success by setting behavioral expectations and the school has less altercations and problems before school. As a result, students are calm and there is no wondering around before school begins.

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Leilehua Complex: The Quality Assurance process employed by the Leilehua Complex builds interdisciplinary teams around the six areas of CSSS. The team specifically addressing transitions identified improving transitions for students with special needs from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school as an important focus for this year. Their creative intervention was to host a **transition potluck** at Wahiawa Middle School, inviting SPED teachers, counselors, administrators, SSCs, registrars, and social workers from Wheeler Middle and Leilehua High to attend. The 35 participants were asked to sit with people from other schools and were welcomed by the hosting school's principal, who participated in the entire event. The agenda included an ice breaker and brainstorming session with the over arching intention of creating

relationships between professional staff members that work with students from one school to the next. Over the course of the two hour meeting, the staff members from different schools were able to network over good food and a relaxed atmosphere.

Participants felt the **transition potluck** was a successful way to generate good ideas to support transitions for students with special needs. Suggestions that have been acted on to date include: students from Leilehua high school have come to speak to middle school students about what life is really like in high school, and middle school SPED teachers will go and sit in on high school classes to see what it is really like and better prepare their students. The participating schools are in full support of these efforts and are coordinating time out of the classroom for teachers to participate. The **transition potluck** was so successful that Wahiawa Middle School and the complex wide transition team are hosting another potluck for their four elementary feeder schools.



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If you have a What's Working practice that you are proud of please share it with us, it might be featured in our next publication!

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