



Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation Hope for Kids Overview

In interviewing a range of experts who work with children in Hawai'i the board and staff of Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation heard over and over that too many of our children lack hope. This sounded an alarm for us, especially because our benefactor sought to expand opportunities for children to build hope and a positive future. So we explored what might instill hope in our children. Of course we know that many factors influence a child's sense of hope. And, we also recognize that for some children, it is harder to feel hopeful about their future than others.

In considering the factors we might influence that contribute to the sense of hope we want for all of our children, we agreed that our efforts should focus on promoting resiliency – the ability of children to cope with and adapt to adverse factors that could negatively impact their development. Resiliency is often thought of in terms of protective factors – with greater protective factors a child is more resilient and better able to move forward in the face of life's challenges. Research shows that protective factors can come from a variety of sources. One way to develop protective factors in a child is to ensure the child has a meaningful relationship with an adult who is caring and provides affirmation.

Having high expectations for a child and creating opportunities for a child to be successful through the development of skills are two other ways to build protective factors. When children learn topics that are meaningful to them and when learning occurs in places that are relevant to them, the result tends to be greater engagement, which in turn results in better learning outcomes. There is also research and practical wisdom showing that engagement of children is greater and results are better when children learn experientially, or by doing.

Learning outdoors has multiple benefits for children. “No Child Left Inside” and “Nature Deficit Disorder” are becoming common terms that describe the value to a child of learning outside: Children's learning is enhanced; they have more opportunities for physical activity; and they develop better social skills. Children also are more likely to become lifelong stewards of the natural environment when they spend time outside during their childhood. Learning in the outdoors or “from the land” in Hawai'i provides a rich opportunity to connect contemporary lessons to traditional cultural practices; to explore one's own cultural identity or to understand and appreciate Hawaii's special multicultural history.

With these ideas in mind, we have developed a focused grantmaking strategy, *Hope for Kids*, in which we have engaged a group of ten nonprofit partners in Hawai'i who are working with children in programs that promote resiliency, develop life skills, promote cultural awareness and instill a sense of environmental stewardship.

Through May, 2015 *Hope for Kids* will focus resources on improving, expanding and learning about the impact of programs that have an educational component that is structured, relevant and intentional, in a nontraditional setting and incorporates the following **Core Elements**:

- Provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with an adult who is knowledgeable and affirming.
- Believe in the potential of children and set high expectations for their performance.
- Assist children in the development of life skills.
- Provide opportunities to celebrate and find strength in one's cultural identity and/or use culture as a tool for learning.
- Provide opportunities to learn in the out of doors fostering the development of stewardship - a love of the natural world.