The “I” in the IEP Middle School Curriculum

Introducing the lessons of
HAʻI MO ʻOLELO – TELL YOUR OWN STORY

Purpose:
This curriculum is designed to empower youth as they approach the crossroads to adulthood. The five units are tailored to help students journey toward empowerment in the context of their educational planning. Lessons are created to help students learn more about their preferences, desires, and strengths, recognize people important in their lives, identify causes they feel are critical to support, and know how to find additional resources to help achieve dreams and plans for the future.

Directing your own future is a challenge that is supported by a deep understanding of self. This knowledge about personal preferences, passions, strengths, growth areas, goals, and dreams can lead to self-advocacy and other expressions of empowerment, including advocating for human and environmental rights.

Culture Based:
Designed to be culturally relevant to youth of Native Hawaiian heritage, these lessons integrate Hawaiian values, relatable topics for local youth, and research based teaching strategies proven effective in helping students from Hawaiʻi achieve personal and academic success in school.

Educators are encouraged to adapt the context and content to be culturally responsive to their own students’ backgrounds and home cultures. Integrating culture-based stories, poetical sayings, valuable knowledge from elders, and communication styles can support adaptations. Creating and learning for an authentic purpose provides relevance to the work students do, helping increase ownership of their efforts.

Designed to Engage:
Teachers are encouraged to use ideas and resources to actively engage students with the content and with each other. Collaborative learning, a strategy that is both culturally relevant and appropriate for the middle school student, can help enhance a sense of community as youth learn about each other’s strengths and skills while thinking and producing together.

Sense of Self, Place, and Community:
Sense of self is rooted within a family and social context. Developing deeper understanding about our relationships with the people with whom we live, learn, and play can help individuals recognize different ways to navigate the world and all of its choices.

Identifying connections to the environment is also woven into lessons, with the recognition that sense of self can spring from strong bonds to significant places. Understanding roots and
relationships can help people learn about themselves as well as what they feel is important for the greater good.

**Framework:**
The general framework and sequence of units within the curriculum provides a road to empowerment. Lessons within the first four units can help students with and without disabilities gain knowledge and apply skills that move them toward having a voice in decisions that affect their educational progress and future beyond school.

One curriculum goal is to help special education students advocate for their own desires at their next IEP meeting. Therefore, Unit 5 is designed to help students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) understand the purpose and process of IEP meetings and how they can influence their own time in school. This unit also helps students rethink their understanding of “disability”.

**Protocols to support Collaboration:**
Developing protocols on how to best work together and use positive communication skills is suggested prior to teaching these lessons. Working with partners and teams is woven into many activities where students are encouraged to voice their opinions and share their ideas. Helping classmates co-create positive class protocols and expectations for maintaining respect, listening well, fostering a positive working environment, and staying on task to complete assignments is encouraged.

**Curriculum Patterns:**
Establishing a purpose for learning helps students recognize how effort now can impact their future. Providing authentic reasons for completing a task is important motivation for many students.

Connecting prior knowledge and personal experience helps us understand new information. Getting to know your students’ lifestyles can help connect these life experiences to what is being taught.

Demonstrate and model what you want students to do and learn; provide support till they are more independent in completing the work.

Shared reflections about what’s been done or learned helps process new knowledge and understand it from additional perspectives. Gathering information on what went well can help focus attention on which ideas can be expanded to make things even better in the future.

**Suggestions:**
* Provide a folder for students to save all worksheets and handouts for each lesson so they can refer back to them for their final project.

* Connect students to the environment by taking learning outside when appropriate and possible.
* Establishing boundaries and protocols beforehand for special activities like working outside can help students understand responsibilities associated with the privilege. Co-creating protocols supports student ownership.

* Set the bar high to encourage deeper thinking and completion of assignments. Provide differentiated support as needed to enable students to create responses and products they value.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Thank you to those providing approval to share these videos on the curriculum DVD:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit &amp; Lesson</th>
<th>What's On the Curriculum DVD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1 lesson 1</td>
<td>Kohala Kuamo‘o-Nae‘ole’s Race to Save a King video - a story by the Kawai‘ae‘a ‘Ohana (Published by Kamehameha Press)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1 Lesson 4</td>
<td>E Ola Pono Competition Videos (Creating Pono Schools Project): Lending a Helping Hand Pono, A Way of Life Aia I Hi‘ikua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2 Lesson 1</td>
<td>E Ola Pono Competition Videos (Creating Pono Schools Project): Grandma, What is Pono? Do Right Pick Ur Litter Respect our Environment, Respect our Home Endangered Waters - The Cruise Industry in Hawai`i video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2 Lesson 2</td>
<td>E Ola Pono Competition Videos (Creating Pono Schools Project): Keaau Middle College What is Pono? Generations Pono Pass It On</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 4 Lesson 1</td>
<td>Universal Declaration of Human Rights video (Human Rights Action Center; Mr. Jack Healey)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 5 Lesson 1</td>
<td>No Arms, No Legs, No Worries! video (Altitude is Attitude Organization; Mr. Nick Vujicic)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UNIT OVERVIEWS

Unit 1: Maopopo Ia`u Iho - Self-awareness
This unit is about understanding self and how we all experience reality through our own cultural lense. With a clearer understanding of how we view the world, we can also look at other ideas and perspectives. A strong sense of self allows us to better understand our world and the relationships we have with people and place.

Lessons in Unit 1 are foundational, so allowing ample time to explore the content is suggested. These lessons encourage teachers to share appropriate personal stories, which offers a chance to connect with students in a deeper way while providing a model of personal development. Building a sense of classroom community is most pronounced in Unit 1.

Lessons in this unit include:
1. I Maika`i Ke Kalo i Ka `Oha (Personal History): To deepen understanding of who they are, students complete a self reflection and a family interview to learn about their own history.

2. Mo`o `Ohana* / Ku`u `Aina Hānau (Family History / Sense of Place): In support of their journey to understand self, students focus on learning about places, traditions, stories, activities, and people important to their family.

3. Ke A`o `Ana (Strengths, Needs, and Learning Preferences): During this lesson, students will use self assessment tools to better understand personal choices and learning preferences.

4. Pilina (Connections of Support): The importance of having people who can provide help in life is stressed in this lesson, where students identify their own personal “circles of support”.

* Note: When exploring the meaning of “family” with students, please consider youth with poor family relations or other extenuating circumstances. The generally accepted local definition of ‘ohana or family includes the much broader concept or hanai or adopted family members, generally people who are loved, trusted, and cared about, people who are in relationship due to a variety of circumstances.

Unit 2: Aloha Kekahi i Kekahi – Love and concern for each other
This unit focuses on the importance of caring for each other and recognizing what is of value. Lessons help students explore and develop an understanding of moral issues. Self-awareness in relation to others and the world is cultivated, helping students develop a social conscience that can support engagement in advocacy. Skills to organize themselves and communicate ideas are provided to help students grow into effective advocates and learners.

Lessons in this unit include:
1. **Ho'ihī: Respect as a Very Important Value**: A foundation to positive personal behavior, the concept of respect is discussed, observed, and then shared back by students to their peers in an effort to promote aloha and consideration at their school.

2. **He Mea Waiwai Nui: Other Values of Importance**: Like woven strands, the understanding and importance of interconnected guiding personal values are discussed and brought to life via a collaborative art project.

3. **Kūkūkūkū e Hoʻolohe: To Discuss and Hear (Communication Skills)**: Students will gain a deeper understanding of observing and hearing through partner and small group activities. This lesson also offers an opportunity to move learning outside.

4. **ʻImi Naʻauoa: Decision Making**: This lesson offers students a chance to learn about the variables involved in making decisions while they practice this skill using two different graphic organizing tools.

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**Unit 3: Ko`u `i`ini - Self-determination**

Self-determination is first knowing what you want for yourself; next, creating plans on how to accomplish this desire; and then making choices that move you toward your goal. With the privilege or right of self-determination comes the responsibility to Kūlia I ka nuʻu, striving to reach the highest. This standard, a motto of Queen Kapʻiolani, reflects the exceptionally high quality of work recognized in Hawaiian healing practices, arts and crafts, music and dance, various fields of science, and other expressions of the culture achieved over the years.

*Lessons in this unit include:*

**#1: Hoʻopaʻa i na pahuhopu – To set the foundation in order to move forward: Setting goals:**
Learning about the value of goals and ways to set and keep them are provided through reading, discussion, and examples from others.

**#2: Koho i ka naʻauao – Selecting knowledge or enlightenment: Educational opportunities:**
Future careers and jobs are the focus, including how to dream big and think practical about choosing and working toward an occupation of choice.

**#3: Na kumu waiwai - Source of things of great importance: Resources in and out of school:**
Students learn about a variety of resources and how to obtain support in different areas of life.

**#4: Hoʻoholo i ka manawa a me ka ʻaloʻahia: Managing time and stress:**
Information and strategies are shared to help students better understand stress and how it impacts people as well as ways to prioritize daily activities to better manage time.

**#5: ʻImi i nā mea hoʻoko i nā kumu – Using resources to support goals:**
Helping students understand how to find community resources and complete various applications is the focus of this lesson.
Unit 4: Kūpono– To stand for what is right - Social justice

Social justice is an understanding of what is fair and pono, what is righteous, harmonious, and respectful. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly defines social justice. Ideally, achieving this Declaration’s standards of social justice would result in all members of a society having the same basic rights, security, opportunities, obligations and social benefits. Understanding reality is part of this unit’s goals. Growing a strong sense of social justice is important to help youth make decisions about what they want to support or advocate for, be it for others, the environment, or themselves.

Lessons within this unit include:

#1: Kū i ka pono no ka honua - To make things right for the world: Students are introduced to the value of Kūpono while they learn about social justice promoted in the Declaration of Universal Human Rights and concerns about child labor harming youngsters worldwide.

#2: Kū i ka pono no Hawai‘i - To make things right for Hawai‘i: A focus on environmental concerns brings the concept of social justice back home and relevant to Hawai‘i.

#3: Nā kuleana o ke kula - Rights and responsibilities of school: Students take a look at what rights and responsibilities come with the opportunity to gain an education; they examine what an emotionally safe environment looks like and they co-create a vision of their school at its best.

#4: Nā kuleana o nā haumāna – Rights and responsibilities of students: A personal perspective of kuleana as a student is the focus of the last lesson in this unit, where participants create commitments to support their own education, school, family, and community.

Unit 5: E kāko`o kākou – Advocacy

E kāko`o kākou, to help each other, is part of the cultural fabric of Hawai‘i, today and in the past. Advocating for others, a cause, or a special place is something often done by groups, here as well as worldwide. Unity with others gives strength to the issue, the position, and the group.

Self-advocacy, or speaking up about your own needs, is sometimes a challenge when humbleness and a respect for those who are highly educated may provide expectations of less expressive behavior. Students are encouraged to learn appropriate methods, times, and places to speak their truth to support what they want to achieve.

These lessons are geared to help youth in special education programs learn about the IEP process and how they can have a voice in guiding their academic program as they prepare for a future of their choice.
Lessons in this unit include:

#1: Pehea e kāko`o i nā hou? (What is advocacy?): The class begins this lesson by thinking about the benefits of working together and people who model being strong advocates. Students are then introduced to an exceptional individual who advocates on an international level for personal empowerment, no matter what.

#2: Nā mea i hiki`ole ke hana`ia (Understanding what it means to have a disability): Students have a chance to review their own IEPs with support to clarify any unclear sections. Information about the IEP plan and review process is provided to help students gain clarity about ways they can share their voice to influence their own education.

#3: Ho`olālā Organizing to have my voice heard (Preparing for self advocacy): A review of materials from former units helps students finish their Star Chart and complete their Guide for Graduation and Beyond that can help them advocate for their own educational desires at their next IEP meeting.

#4: Ho`oma`ama`a - To practice, to prepare: (Practicing self advocacy): In this last lesson, students have a chance to share their story with classmates to rehearse for their next IEP meeting as well as celebrate what they have learned about themselves, each other, and the community and place where they live and learn.