

Literary Community Statement

Arts education for keiki is at the heart of all that I do. Growing up, I had the amazing fortune of learning from visual artists, theater artists, dancers, and poets. My parents, although not artists themselves, encouraged my creativity, which was a bastion as I struggled with dyslexia and learning to read. It is because of this understanding of the transformative nature of the arts that I have dedicated my professional life to supporting arts education in public and charter schools across the pae ‘āina.

During graduate school at the University of Montana, I trained as a teaching artist with the Missoula Writing Collaborative. I brought these skills with me to Nicaragua, where I helped to found a community arts program with the support of local librarians. Later, I returned to my home island of O‘ahu to teach poetry with the Pacific Writers’ Connection’s Writers in the Schools Program at Palolo Elementary School and Hālau Lōkahi Charter School.

In 2017, I began working with the SFCA’s Artists in the Schools program as a teaching artist. In this position, I have partnered with schools to create literary arts curricula reflective of students’ communities, cultures, and ecosystems. I have built relationships with public and charter schools in Wai‘anae, Nānākuli, ‘Ewa, Honolulu, Maunawili, O‘ahu and Kualapu‘u, Molokai. I have also supported creative writing initiatives beyond the classroom in partnerships with Poetry Out loud, Camp Mokule‘ia, Donkey Mill Art Center, and the Hawai‘i State Art Museum. I am currently partnering with Pomaika‘i Elementary School on Maui to bring literary arts professional development to teachers from across Maui.

Although I know that not all of my students will become writers of poetry, fiction or creative nonfiction in the future, I hope that our 8-10 week residencies will encourage them to encounter language with a sense of play and a willingness to think outside-the-box. During our time together, students write about their lives, articulate their thoughts, and give voice to their imagination. I try to foster a dynamic and compassionate learning space where students feel comfortable exploring and sharing their creative voice. As a class, we practice working collaboratively to solve problems and build meaning together. My central goal is to build a literary community where my students feel heard and honored.

In the future, I hope to create an ‘āina-based arts education program that will offer rigorous professional development for classroom teachers and immersive ‘āina-based arts learning for students.