

Evaluation Report

Compiled by HACBED

SustAINable Food Systems Professional Development (PDE3)

Course Dates: June 15th, 16th, 19th, and 20th, 2017

Course Description:

This course provides multidisciplinary analyses of the food systems of Hawai'i. Through a combination of lecture, discussion and field experiences participants will examine the historical forces shaping food and agricultural systems in Hawai'i and the key socio-economic and ecological costs and benefits of the current agri-food system in Hawai'i. Participants will explore elements of sustainable community food systems, experience local food systems professionals, and discuss and identify future directions for student involvement with food system study and change.

Methodology:

The HACBED team led an evaluation session on the final day of the Professional Development (PD), June 20th, 2017, with all participants. The session involved breaking into two mid-sized evaluation groups each facilitated by a HACBED team member. The group size allowed for every participant to voice their opinion and share their reflections on the course. To facilitate meaningful dialogue the HACBED team developed the following questions to be addressed by each group:

1. What in the PD worked well?
2. What did you not enjoy? Or was did you find not as useful?
3. What was missing? What would you like to see in future PD opportunities?

Additionally, the organizers of the PD were convened for an evaluation session on June 29th, 2017. This session allowed project partners, including UHWO and PLACES, to share their reflections on the PD as well as their thoughts on the planning and collaboration that went into the course and any recommendations for future PD courses.

Reflections:

Broadly, a large majority of participants expressed satisfaction with the PD course, one even describing it as "setting the bar for other PDs." Building on initial positive responses the small group evaluation discussions with teacher participants revealed two primary categories of reflection; 1) thoughts on the structure and form of the PD; and 2) opinions on the content of the PD.

Many participants enjoyed that the course took place over 4 days with the weekend in the middle, they found it to be helpful to have the weekend as a break to process and recharge. Further, teachers appreciated that the PD was free as well as flexible and responsive. One participant mentioned that they had attended previous PDs which were more expensive and not as good. Another often repeated positive was the integration of theory and practice--or what participants described as "mindful partnerships" and "modeling of community food systems."

Generally, participants noted that the field sites were great and enjoyed seeing both sides of the island as well as the ability to practice what was being discussed and the opportunity to go through the process like their kids would do if they planned a similar field site visit. Additionally, participants highlighted the integration of technology such as the course website, portfolio templates, and Photo Circle application. Planning partners thought there was a nice balance between field sites, lectures, and planning time as well as appreciated the consistent structure, good food, and space for many voices.

The second primary area of reflection identified by participants was the content covered through the PD. Teachers appreciated the “overall mindfulness” and described the course as powerful. The incorporation of many voices and community experts was seen as a key asset. Additionally, the course was planned to be holistic and interdisciplinary, participants appreciated this and the effort to appeal to all subjects. Participants also found the built in reflection process designed by PLACES to facilitate “intense learning” supported by field site visits and “well chosen” readings. Indeed, participants noted that they went into the course expecting to know a lot already and ended up leaving the course with greater depth and perspective on environmental issues.

Recommendations:

In addition to the above provided reflections on what worked well, participants also provided constructive criticism and shared ideas to improve the course in future iterations. These thoughts generally fell into the two above mentioned categories of structure and content as well as a few more general recommendations.

In terms of structure, some participants struggled with the lectures after lunchtime. This was largely due to timing and being tired after lunch. To ameliorate this challenge, participants recommended having lecturers come to field experiences to begin introducing their concepts as well as breaking up lectures to give time to process the information. Breaking up lectures might also provide some requested time to work with other teachers in the same subject area. Planning partners found that the course planning took more time than expected and future budgets should take this into account. Also, planning partners emphasized the importance of teachers “feeling like there is a coordinated effort in the community around them” and the importance of following-up after the PD to keep momentum. Part of the model being piloted through this PD is maintaining closeness and connection to teachers to support them as they strive to serve their students.

Relating to content, many participants and the planning partners still thought a lot of the content “would be hard for their students to process.” Although, no solution to this challenge was provided, the rigour of the content and capacity of students and teachers is an important consideration to take into account. Another key recommendation involved providing time to discuss potential solutions to ecological challenges--specifically bringing in an expert on the political side of things to discuss opportunities for civic engagement. Finally, participants identified a number of content areas which could be included in future PDs, such as: meat and fish production/consumption, aquaponics, and fishponds.

Finally, many participants indicated an interest in staying connected after the end of the PD course. To help facilitate this, participants requested the contact info of community partners, lecturers, and other participants be shared. Additionally, teachers envisioned continuing and expanding the PD course into a Malama Aina teacher track, with different levels and efforts to create new courses. Participants also highlighted the difficulty of implementing some of the recommended pedagogies identified in the course and the need for administrators to participate in a similar PD to build institutional support.

Next Steps:

Based on the evaluation reflections provided by both participants and partner organizations we have developed a number of next steps explored in more detail below.

1. Continued engagement with participants

Participants specifically requested to “keep line of communication going.” To do this PLACES, HACBED, and UHWO will work together to organize at least one convening for the teachers to discuss their portfolios as well as encourage resource sharing and further collaboration. Ideally, lecturers from the PD will be on hand to answer questions and provide advice.

2. Building connections with community and school administrators

Additionally, planning partners emphasized the importance of community outreach and recommended some sort of ho’ike to connect with the broader community. Further, there is a clear need to deepen collaboration with school administrators to help institutionalize the ‘aina based approach.