

UNIVERSITY LABORATORY SCHOOL

I. UNIVERSITY LABORATORY SCHOOL

The University Laboratory School, also known as The Education Laboratory School, is administered by the University of Hawai'i's Curriculum Research & Development Group (CRDG) under an agreement with the Local School Board of The Education Laboratory, a Hawai'i New Century Charter School. The school serves approximately 420 K–12 students who are selected by lottery and represent the full range of the state's public school children in ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and academic achievement.

The school serves as a model for school design, providing a comprehensive academic program for all students in heterogeneous classes. The school rates high among the state's schools on participation in extracurricular activities. Its students consistently earn awards in competitions in the arts, music, writing, and speech in addition to consistently high scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Almost all of its graduates go on to post-secondary education.

The school is the only one in Hawai'i with the mission of supporting educational research and development and disseminating educational materials and improvement strategies. The school has long served the Curriculum Research & Development Group as its real-world laboratory. CRDG programs get their early development and trials in the school's classes.

New educational ideas and courses are developed and tested in the school, where teachers also demonstrate completed academic programs to visiting teachers and administrators. Many of the curriculum materials developed at the school have won educational awards, and CRDG and the Laboratory School staff have provided in-service workshops for thousands of teachers.

Since this is a special focus school of choice, parents must be willing to accept the mission of the school and agree that their child will participate in all components of the University Laboratory School program. All products produced by students, imagery of all types, and data concerning all Laboratory School students belong to the school and may be used by the school for, among other things, research, publication, dissemination, and recordings.

Thus the school serves two interlocking missions: to design and deliver the best possible education to its students, and to serve the educational research and development community as an inventing and testing ground for high-quality curriculum and instruction.

II. SCHOOL HOURS AND CURRICULUM

School hours for kindergarten through grade three are from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; for grades four and five from 8:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.; and for grades six through twelve from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The school year begins in mid-August and ends in mid-May.

Each year all students participate in a prescribed comprehensive education program. Students in K–5 take English, math, science, social studies, art, music, and physical education each year. Currently, the Laboratory School elementary division is testing and demonstrating a Health, Science and Technology program and testing a new mathematics curriculum.

III. ACADEMIC PROGRAM

All students receive a comprehensive academic program, enrolling each year in English, social studies, science, mathematics, art, and instrumental or vocal music, plus physical education, technology, drama, and (in grades 10–12), a second language, thus providing all students with a strong academic foundation.

These features mark the school's academic program:

- The school has a long-term curriculum that promotes learning and meets and exceeds the Hawai'i Content and Performance Standards.
- The school communicates to students and their families that learning is expected of all and that every effort will be made by the staff to achieve this goal for every student.
- All students have an equal opportunity to experience the school's program and achieve the school's educational objectives.
- The school does not track students or have differentiated programs. Classes are heterogeneous.
- The school's instructional methods stress direct experience, hands-on activity, inquiry and experimentation, simulations, role-playing, and cooperative learning.
- The school's program opens doors for post-high school opportunities. It prepares all students for admission to higher education so that they have choices for the future.

Strategies for Academic Learning

Curriculum. An individual learns essential knowledge best when it is presented in a consistent, logical, developmental pattern over a long span of time. Short, modular bits of knowledge do not fit into patterns or reinforce each other, hence are quickly forgotten. The learning process for each person (including the skills, concepts, and processes that make up knowledge) must be consistent and developmental from lesson to lesson, from unit to unit, from semester to semester, from teacher to teacher, and through all the years of schooling. For example, instruction in composition includes daily practice over the years of schooling. Each lesson on writing integrates knowledge and skills taught earlier with new, advanced, and more complex features, so that review and integration of old with the new is continuous.

This strategy consists of two interrelated parts. Students must be working throughout their educational careers in a selected number of essential fields of knowledge: the sciences (both natural and social), the humanities (art, music, literature, and drama), and technology. This study must be augmented with sports, activity in organizations, and other extra-curricular activities to build a balanced top-quality program.

Varied instructional approaches. There is a place for telling, lecturing, drilling the class, and assigning and monitoring class work and homework. But most instructional activity consists of inquiring, questioning, probing, hypothesizing, critical thinking, and other intellectual endeavors. Students of all age levels and ability are steadily immersed in interesting and challenging tasks, problems, and well-written, significant pieces of literature. It is best if students see more sophisticated practitioners, both teachers and more advanced students, working at the task and exemplifying or modeling the integrated, humane aspects of all intellectual and practical work. A curriculum that continually integrates part to whole, earlier to later, simple to more complex, and theoretical to applied is most likely to relate to differences in students' rates and styles of learning.

Extra-curricular activities. Students learn through a variety of experiences. Regular classroom activities, of course, are the important staple in the school. But other avenues for learning are valuable in their own right and help set the stage for more normal school learning. The school offers a rich program of student activities such as sports, drama, music, speech, clubs and field trips.