

**The philoSURFERS: Reflections on utilising pre-collegiate students as  
Philosophers in Residence to support the p4c Hawai'i movement in our public  
schools**

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**Abstract**

Since 1984, the philosophy for children (p4c) Hawai'i movement, a partnership between the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) and Hawai'i's public schools, has experienced success in creating a more philosophical schooling experience. UHM's Uehiro Academy for Philosophy and Ethics in Education supports this movement by offering a 'Philosopher in Residence' who aids teachers in bringing philosophical inquiry into practice (Lukey 2013). Philosophers in Residence continue to support p4c Hawai'i at Kailua High School, Waimānalo Intermediate and Elementary School, and Waikīkī, Ka'elepulu, and Sunset Beach Elementary Schools.

As the movement grows, we continually ask, how can we support teachers in making p4c a 'living and reliable educational option' (Lipman 1988, p. vii) with limited resources? One solution is the philoSURFER Internship Project, where pre-college

students intern with university Philosophers in Residence and assist kindergarten through to ninth grade teachers in ‘doing’ philosophy with students. Kailua High School started their first philoSURFERS cohort in the fall of 2015, and Sunset Beach Elementary School adapted the model and had their first cohort of philoSURFERS in the fall of 2021. Since 2015, 151 philoSURFERS have supported over 65 teachers and thousands of students at eight schools to engage in philosophical inquiry.

The aim of this academic reflection is to share the lessons the five authors and project coordinators have learned over the last eight years of this school-university partnership for other organisations interested in utilising pre-collegiate students as catalysts for making philosophy an integral aspect of our schools.

### **Key words**

community outreach, inquiry, internship, p4c Hawai’i, philosopher in residence, philosophy, Philosophy for Children, progressive education, university partnerships

### **Introduction: Supporting Hawai’i’s Philosophy for Children movement with a Philosopher in Residence**

In 1984, Thomas Jackson started supporting Hawai’i’s teachers who were interested in bringing philosophy into their classrooms, more specifically, teachers implementing Matthew Lipman’s Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children curriculum. This marks the beginning of the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa’s (UHM) outreach to Hawai’i’s public kindergarten through to grade 12 (K-12) schools. While in-class support has been a constant for the 39-plus years of this university-public school partnership, the means and aims of providing support for teachers have expanded. In the first twenty years, ‘in-class support was at first accomplished by the addition to the classroom of a philosopher/facilitator—a person with extensive experience in doing p4c who would join the teacher as a weekly participant in p4c sessions’ (Jackson 2012, p. 4). This philosopher was Jackson, his colleagues, or UHM Department of Philosophy graduate students. They found their regular presence in the classroom was crucial to building meaningful and trusting relationships with the students, and developing creative partnerships with the participating classroom teachers. The intention was never to ‘replace’ the classroom teacher, but rather to create a true partnership because ‘the pedagogical skills of the teacher in combination with the philosophical skills of the p4c facilitator were essential in order to engage the children in philosophical inquiry’ (p. 4). Unlike other ‘specials’ (e.g. art, music or physical education), Jackson and his team did not aim to

come in as the 'expert' and take over the class to lead a philosophy lesson. However, in spite of the enthusiasm for p4c in Hawai'i and this partnership with UHM, we discovered that when in-class support in a given classroom or school slowed or ceased, the use of p4c Hawai'i as an instructional approach often slowed or ceased as well.

According to Makaiau (2017), p4c Hawai'i is a culturally responsive offshoot of Lipman and Sharp's P4C programme that evolved in response to the tensions that arose while doing P4C in Hawai'i's multicultural context, more specifically, 'from the way in which the Hawaiian concept of aloha is used to mediate these tensions and build community between diverse groups of people in the islands' (p. 21). In *Philosophical Rules of Engagement*, Jackson (2013) details community, inquiry, philosophy and reflection as the 'pillars' of the p4c Hawai'i framework and introduces several concrete strategies and tools to implement p4c Hawai'i into classroom practice. Among the most important and frequently used are the concept of intellectual safety and strategies such as the creation and use of a community ball, the Plain Vanilla philosophical inquiry model, and the *Good Thinker's Toolkit* (Jackson 2001, p. 462–463). These structures, procedures and tools are works in progress and are regularly modified to include and validate our students' cultures, languages, histories, socio-economic backgrounds, and other aspects of their identities during the building of relationships and the co-construction of knowledge (Makaiau 2017, p. 21).

One of the underlying aims of the partnership between UHM and Hawai'i's public schools was to develop and nurture teacher-philosophers, who—as their 'philosopher's pedagogy' (Makaiau & Miller 2012) teaching practice evolved—would eventually not need the in-class support of a Philosopher in Residence to engage their students in philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Ideally, these teacher-philosophers would also become 'in-house experts' and serve as p4c mentors and leaders at their school, much like a Philosopher in Residence. This aim was supported by an emphasis on a philosopher's pedagogy to teach any subject area. From 1984 until the early 2000s, UHM primarily supported the use of p4c Hawai'i in elementary school classrooms, where teachers

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<sup>1</sup> The philosopher's pedagogy requires a set of six interconnected educational commitments: (1) the teacher must live an examined life; (2) the teacher must see education as a shared activity between teacher and student; (3) the teacher and students must re-conceptualise the 'content' of the discipline as a reflection of the interaction between the classroom participant's beliefs and experiences and the subject matter being taught; (4) the teacher must hold, with Dewey (1916), the view that philosophy is 'the general theory of education'; (5) teachers and students must make philosophy a living classroom practice; (6) teachers must be willing to challenge contemporary measures for classroom assessment (Makaiau & Miller 2012).

were able to set aside time dedicated to p4c as its own 'subject' (Jackson 2012; Lukey 2012, 2013). However, this changed when UHM began providing Kailua High School (KHS) a Philosopher in Residence in 2007, which it has done each academic year since then.

As the first UHM Philosopher in Residence to be placed at a high school, Benjamin Lukey (2012) identified the assumptions some teachers had about his role in the classroom; 'when I began work at Kailua High School I understood that I had to overcome the entrenched view of philosophy as a content specialisation and the view of the philosopher as subject specialist if I were to make any impact in my role as philosopher in residence' (p. 39). Rather than being the 'resident philosopher' who dispensed his expertise on the academic subject of philosophy, Lukey, in collaboration with teachers (many of them from the school's Language Arts department), refined a Philosopher in Residence's role in the secondary, content driven classroom. In this role, Lukey identified his primary duty would be to help teachers and students engage in philosophical activity in the classroom, regardless of content area or specialisation. 'Philosophy as an activity, specifically as a pedagogical activity, is something for all content areas. Therefore, philosophical activity also provides an opportunity for teachers to engage in a form of interdisciplinary inquiry' (Lukey 2012, p. 39).

What emerged from Lukey's revolutionary work as a Philosopher in Residence in the high school classroom was an established framework for future Philosophers in Residence, such as Miller and the philoSURFERS, that defined the main roles of a Philosopher in Residence when working with teachers and students:

1. The Philosopher in Residence helps keep the focus on philosophical questions of purpose and meaning;
2. The Philosopher in Residence helps create a community where interdepartmental discussion can flourish; and
3. The Philosopher in Residence collaborates with specialist teachers to think about curriculum, classroom issues, and lesson plans. (Lukey 2012, p. 40)

This framework proved to be extremely helpful because in 2012 an increasing number of K-12 teachers became interested in utilising p4c Hawai'i pedagogy in their classrooms.<sup>2</sup> There were requests by nearly every school in the Kailua Complex to the

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<sup>2</sup> This number rapidly increased most likely due to four main reasons: (1) publicly recognised success of students and schools, illustrated by the 2012 visit by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to have an

then newly established UHM Uehiro Academy for Philosophy and Ethics in Education (Uehiro Academy), the home of p4c Hawai'i, to either help start or support a budding p4c Hawai'i movement at their school with the assistance of a Philosopher in Residence.

While the growing interest was certainly exciting for our aim to create a K-12 philosophical schooling experience in our public schools, it presented several issues with the model of support UHM was providing participating teachers. Namely, there were not enough resources to adequately support teachers' efforts to make 'philosophy a living and reliable educational option' (Lipman 1988, p. vii). For instance, at the time, UHM only had three Philosophers in Residence (Jackson, Lukey and Miller) supporting the p4c movement in Hawai'i's public schools, which could in no way meet all of the requests for support at these eight schools in the Kailua K-12 Complex.<sup>3</sup>

In brainstorming possible solutions to this problem, Cheriessa Shiroma, a veteran KHS p4c Hawai'i practitioner, suggested we enlist the expertise of the numerous talented teenage philosophers in our classes. We did something similar in 2014, when we took 25 KHS students to Waimānalo Elementary and Intermediate School (one of the two middle schools that feed into KHS) in order to facilitate the p4c Hawai'i inquiries at their annual WE>I Community Day. This single, one day experience showed what was possible in using young adults as ongoing supports for teachers interested in bringing p4c Hawai'i into their classrooms. Shiroma's suggestion in the spring of 2014 marks the beginning of the philoSURFERS.

### **The philoSURFER Internship Project**

The philoSURFER Internship Project is an extension of UHM's Philosopher in Residence initiative (Lukey 2013) and places pre-collegiate students in the role of a Philosopher in Residence in kindergarten through to ninth grade classrooms,

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inquiry with the KHS student body; (2) shifting educational values as standards, demonstrated by the implementation of the Common Core State Standards, which make an overt push for schools to provide the skills and opportunities for students to develop the ability to think for themselves and with others; (3) increased p4c Hawai'i Professional Development workshops for educators; and (4) the recognised success of p4c Hawai'i teachers; the 2012, 2014 and 2015 Hawai'i Teachers of the Year were all identified in educational circles and in the local media as p4c Hawai'i teachers.

<sup>3</sup> Kailua High School, Kailua Intermediate School, Waimānalo Elementary and Intermediate School, Ka'elepulu Elementary School, Enchanted Lake Elementary School, Keolu Elementary School, Maunawili Elementary School, and Mālama Honua Charter School.

including inclusion and fully self-contained special education classrooms.<sup>4</sup> The 2015-2016 school year marked the inception of the philoSURFERS at KHS, when carefully selected students enrolled in a course that placed them in an educational internship with a UHM Philosopher in Residence, where they supported p4c Hawai'i initiatives in public school classrooms four times a week. Like the Philosopher in Residence, they fulfil the three main roles identified above, aiding elementary and intermediate school teachers in engaging their students in meaningful and rigorous philosophical activity. Thus, the philoSURFERS participate alongside the students and teachers as they explore the questions that matter most to them and then reflect with the teacher afterwards to help make p4c Hawai'i become a reliable educational practice in Kailua Complex classrooms.

The first year of this project (2015-16) was launched by UHM's Philosopher in Residence, Chad Miller, who had five philoSURFERS interning with him. Due to limited transportation resources (they either walked or rode in Miller's truck to schools), this first iteration of the philoSURFERS supported a small cohort of teachers at three local elementary schools. At this time, Miller and Lukey were also leading several professional development p4c Hawai'i workshops for teachers, as well as teaching p4c Hawai'i courses to undergraduate teacher candidates at UHM, so there was growing interest among teachers and school administrators in securing instructional and implementation support from UHM. To meet this need, Miller, KHS Principal Francine Honda, and her administration team submitted a grant proposal to Harold KL Castle Foundation with the aim of securing funding to establish a full position dedicated to directing and supporting the philoSURFER Internship Project, which it did for three academic years. Once the grant funding ended, Honda continued to fund the position for two more years, which extended the Project into the considerable challenges of the distance learning phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. The grant funding and administrative leadership of Honda allowed 115 philoSURFERS to be trained and to support Kailua schools between 2015 and 2020.

In the 2021-2022 school year, Sunset Beach Elementary School (SBES), under the leadership of p4c Hawai'i teacher-leader Emily Fox, started their own philoSURFER Internship Project to meet the growing demand for p4c Hawai'i support among their faculty at this rural school on O'ahu's North Shore, which sits across the street from arguably the world's most famous and challenging waves, Pipeline. Due to the

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<sup>4</sup> The KHS mascot is the Surfrider and they are affectionately known as the Surfers, hence the play on words, philoSURFERS, as coined by one of the first philoSURFERS, Cindy Mendoza.

school's location, as well as in homage to the 'brand', the philoSURFER name remains, as well as its core aims and practices. Like the philoSURFERS before them, these fourth, fifth and sixth grade students support kindergarten through to third grade teachers as they engage in philosophical activities and inquiries together. In their first two years, 36 philoSURFERS have supported 11 teachers, which is roughly half of the school's faculty.

### **How does the philoSURFER Internship Project work?**

#### *How do you 'carefully' select students to take part in the Project?*

From the beginning, we knew the Project would only be as good as the quality of student-philosophers we were able to identify, invite and enrol in the internship program. There is certainly no shortage of capable young people to make the philoSURFERS a very successful educational initiative, but the challenge would be finding those students who were interested in participating and had room in their academic schedule to do so. Prior to the beginning of each semester, the teachers who serve as the Project Coordinators of the philoSURFER Internship Project poll the school's p4c Hawai'i practitioners who readily understand what is needed from the students for nominations, specifically looking for students with the ability and enthusiasm to 'do' philosophy. These nominated students are 'formally' invited to participate in the Project. At KHS, the students meet with their academic counsellors to enrol in the course, while at SBES, students must meet with their 'homeroom teacher' to solidify a time in their daily schedule where they can go into lower elementary classrooms to support the practice of p4c Hawai'i.

Updates in the school bulletin, suggestions from teachers and the Philosophers in Residence, word of mouth, and student designed t-shirt 'uniforms', have all been very helpful in soliciting interest from students and teachers. However, the philoSURFERS themselves are the most powerful 'recruiters'; more and more students are interested in becoming a philoSURFER due to their experiences in doing philosophy with them in elementary or intermediate school. For example, in 2015-2016, Cindy Mendoza supported teachers at several schools, including Waimānalo School, where she inspired two students, Laura Acosta and Marley Booker, who later came to KHS with the intention of being philoSURFERS and ended up becoming some of the longest tenured interns in the Project's history. In the first eight years of the Project (2015–2022), 151 philoSURFERS supported 65 teachers at eight schools and thousands of students engaging in philosophical inquiry.

***Once in the Project, how do we teach the philoSURFERS to facilitate and lead?***

To further educate students in p4c Hawai'i, the philoSURFERS engage in a month-long philoSURFER Boot Camp led by the Project Coordinators with university support from Miller and Lukey. The aim is to provide philoSURFERS with the conceptual understanding, tools and strategies to translate their knowledge and experiences into p4c Hawai'i practice with lower elementary students, which is an entirely different context from where the interns currently practice and facilitate philosophical inquiry.

***Once in classrooms, how do you continue to support the philoSURFERS practice?***

Reflection is a core pillar of p4c Hawai'i (Jackson 2013, p. 100) and thus it is essential to provide the space, tools and opportunities for philoSURFERS to reflect together on their successes, struggles and insights from their work in classrooms. For instance, the KHS philoSURFERS do not provide classroom support on Wednesdays, but instead report to Matsukawa and Shiroma's classroom to intentionally engage in collaborative reflective inquiry. To provide structure to these reflections, Matsukawa and Shiroma created 'Philosophical Marks', which is a tool to guide students through a reflective self-assessment each week of how well they: (1) use tools for thinking and reasoning, (2) make personal connections, (3) engage in metacognition, and (4) seek to understand multiple perspectives. This intentional, guided and consistent self and collaborative reflection provides opportunities for the interns to refine their understanding, use and facilitation of philosophical inquiry. Similarly, SBES philoSURFERS meet Thursdays after school where they experiment with p4c Hawai'i activities, plan with cooperating teachers, and reflect on their experiences in facilitating p4c in lower elementary classrooms. These reflection sessions are frequently supported by UHM Philosophers in Residence, Miller and/or Lukey.

Additionally, the KHS philoSURFERS utilise transportation time to schools to prepare for challenges the philoSURFERS might experience in classrooms. On their way back to KHS, Matsukawa and Shiroma use this opportunity to immediately reflect and evaluate their facilitation of each p4c Hawai'i session. These purposeful reflections are beneficial in celebrating their successes, as well as providing support, encouragement and cognitive coaching needed for interns to be able to promote the philosophical growth and development of each classroom community.



## **What have we learned? Reflections from our first eight years of the philoSURFERS**

Our main aim in producing this academic reflection is to share what we learned in the first eight years of the philoSURFER Internship Project with the hope other organisations may establish similar projects. To prepare this reflection, the five authors reviewed the past eight years of project reports, syllabi, final projects and presentations, curricula, schedules, reflections, personal communications, and notes to identify the major lessons we learned. Returning to these sources of information was crucial to understand the successes and challenges of the philoSURFER Project. This collaborative reflective analysis generated clearly articulated ‘takeaways’ and lessons learned from our experience in creating and evolving the philoSURFER Project. Through our collaborative reflection, six lessons emerged.

The five authors were the participants in the Project and in this academic reflection. We have known each other for many years due to our work in public education with p4c Hawai‘i. Chad Miller is a former KHS and National Board Certified teacher, 2012 Hawai‘i Teacher of the Year, and is currently a Specialist in the Uehiro Academy and UHM’s College of Education, where he teaches instructional methods courses in the p4c Hawai‘i pedagogy and serves as a Philosopher in Residence at several public schools. Benjamin Lukey is the Associate Director of the UHM Uehiro Academy and serves as a Philosopher in Residence at four schools (encompassing Pre-K through to 12). Chieresse Shiroma and Katie Matsukawa are two KHS philoSURFER Project Coordinators and Advisors for the program.<sup>5</sup> Matsukawa is a National Board Certified special education teacher who co-taught with Miller and has been a p4c Hawai‘i practitioner since 2009. Her graduate work examined the cultural responsiveness of p4c Hawai‘i. Shiroma is a special education and career technical education teacher, and a longtime p4c Hawai‘i practitioner, who co-designed and piloted the Philosophical Inquiry course for the Hawai‘i Department of Education with Amber Makaiau and Chad Miller. Emily Fox is a former kindergarten and current grade four teacher at SBES, where she serves as the philoSURFER Project Coordinator. Fox is a leader in the p4c Hawai‘i movement and developed curricula many educators use to implement p4c. Over the years, all authors developed a professional relationship built on collaboration, inquiry, philosophy and reflection.

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<sup>5</sup> Shiroma and Matsukawa took leave from these positions for brief periods of time. In their absence, Jake Nichols and Kelley Espinda, both veteran KHS p4c Hawai‘i practitioners, stepped in as the philoSURFER Project Coordinators.

***Lesson 1: Preparing philoSURFERS to engage young children in 'doing' philosophy***

As previously noted, all philoSURFERS engage in a month-long philoSURFER Boot Camp with the aim of providing these interns with a deeper understanding of the p4c Hawai'i pedagogy by engaging in a tailored introduction to p4c course similar to UHM's *PHIL 492: Philosophy with Children*.<sup>6</sup> The initial belief was if we engaged these 'seasoned' high school philosophers, who are really 'good' at doing p4c, with a more nuanced understanding of the theoretical framework and underpinnings of the pedagogy, it would leave them more prepared to aid teachers in their evolution as p4c Hawai'i practitioners. For example, after revisiting the original Boot Camp curriculum, Miller reflected,

The curriculum utilised scholarly texts, like Dewey (1916), Lipman (1988, 1993), Jackson (2001, 2012, 2013), Lone (2012), and Makaiau and Miller (2012), as the stimulus for doing p4c with the philoSURFERS. We essentially substituted the texts of their high school subject area classes, like English and Social Studies, to 'do' p4c with foundational works of the p4c movement. We thought it would give them a deeper theoretical understanding of their own philosophical experiences, which would translate into creating rich p4c experiences for other children.

However, Matsukawa and Shiroma found this approach did not meet the needs of what the philoSURFERS were being tasked to do with students and teachers. According to a 2019 grant report, Matsukawa and Shiroma remarked, 'it wasn't enough for philoSURFERS to understand the theoretical foundation for philosophy and p4c; they also needed to engage in the act of p4c at a variety of different levels, especially for lower elementary classrooms' (Miller, Matsukawa & Shiroma 2019, p. 9). These interns found that doing p4c with other teens is not the same as facilitating p4c with six and seven-year olds. Thus, in the fourth year of the Project, Matsukawa and Shiroma revised the Boot Camp to address this need and Fox has followed their lead by using their template to create a similar experience for her SBES philoSURFERS.

For instance, the philoSURFERS now engage in p4c Hawai'i activities intended for elementary school students, create their own lessons, and develop a facilitators' 'toolbox' with pre-designed visuals and lessons to help implement philosophy (or

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<sup>6</sup> The course is structured to create an intellectually safe collaborative community of inquiry, provide a conceptual understanding of the philosopher's pedagogy, model p4c Hawai'i's foundational strategies and activities, and aid educators in the designing of curriculum to be implemented into their content-specific classes.

FEE-LA-SO-FEE, as we say in lower elementary) in a variety of contexts. The philoSURFERS test and revise these materials and lessons with each other prior to taking them into classrooms for use. The teachers we support remarked on the change this approach had on the philoSURFERS' skills in facilitating p4c Hawai'i inquiries; 'the philoSURFERS modelled philosophical thinking, pushed our thinking way farther than what we could do by ourselves' (Miller, Matsukawa & Shiroma 2019, p. 7).

Fox takes the SBES philoSURFERS through her own p4c Hawai'i pacing guide that she used with kindergarten students, introducing Jackson's (2001) *Good Thinker's Toolkit* in the order she would teach it to her own class.<sup>7</sup> According to Fox, this modelling aims to 'equip them with activities to go with each thinking skill in hopes they would teach in the same order to their assigned classroom.' The engagement with these well refined activities from a veteran p4c Hawai'i practitioner gives philoSURFERS lesson ideas and a p4c Hawai'i lesson template where they: (1) Review Safe Circle Rules; (2) Engage in a brief community building/maintaining activity; (3) Facilitate a thinking skills activity (focusing on the areas of the *Good Thinker's Toolkit*); (4) Complete a reflection and evaluation on the safeness of the community and the quality of thinking in the activity (Jackson 2001, p. 464). Fox also uses the Boot Camp as an opportunity for the philoSURFERS to introduce new thinking games and activities to use in classrooms, which has led to an ongoing collaboration amongst the philoSURFERS to meet the needs of each classroom they support. According to Fox, at the end of Boot Camp, philoSURFERS are able to plan an entire p4c Hawai'i lesson when given a topic from their host teacher.

We continue to revise the Boot Camp experience to be tailored to meet the needs of the specific communities we work with to ensure we utilise the best methods to prepare the philoSURFERS. For example, if we are supporting many kindergarten classes in a semester, a focus of Boot Camp is on developing p4c Hawai'i activities for five year olds. We will also visit kindergarten classes who already do p4c Hawai'i activities to demonstrate what it is like to think with young children.

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<sup>7</sup> The *Good Thinkers' Toolkit* is a heuristic device designed to promote and evaluate the student's development as responsible and critical thinkers in order to 'become more adept at giving and asking for reasons, detecting assumptions, anticipating consequences, reflecting on inferences they draw, asking for clarification, and seeking evidence and examples as well as counterexamples. They also learn to seek out alternatives and to form criteria for the judgments they make' (Jackson 2001, p. 463).

***Lesson 2: Quality over quantity***

At the Project's inception, Miller and Lukey aggressively tried to meet the demands of schools that wanted Philosopher in Residence support. Because their course load at UHM limited the number of teachers they could personally support, it was crucial to use the additional funding to bring Matsukawa and Shiroma to work in collaboration with Miller and Lukey and serve as the philoSURFER Project Coordinators. The Project Coordinators' leadership provided the daily 'ground' support Miller was unable to do on his own in the Project's first year. This funding and collaboration between UHM and KHS resulted in the number of philoSURFERS growing from five to 26 in the second year of the Project (Miller, Nichols & Shiroma 2017). The significant rise in students participating in the philoSURFER Internship Project led Miller, Lukey, Matsukawa and Shiroma to create a schedule to support as many teachers interested in 'doing' philosophy as possible, which ended up being 50 teachers—nearly five times the number of teachers supported in the first year of the Project (Miller, Nichols & Shiroma 2017).

Miller and the Project Coordinators worked with these teachers and schools to create a consistent schedule where the philoSURFERS worked in pairs to assist classes on a biweekly schedule. Placing the philoSURFERS in pairs stems from the theory that the interns will grow and improve their practice if they collaboratively support classrooms with a peer. Thus, philoSURFERS predominantly work in pairs, providing a resilient structure for effective mentoring and accommodating sometimes unpredictable student schedules. However, we learned that casting such a wide net to introduce p4c Hawai'i to as many teachers as possible came at a cost; we were unable to form trusting relationships with teachers and students to experience the intellectual engagement and depth of p4c Hawai'i in practice (Miller, Nichols & Shiroma 2017). For example, collaborating teachers expressed the biweekly schedule made it difficult for their students to build rapport with the philoSURFERS and encouraged us to consider weekly visits. A weekly schedule would build the necessary relationships to meaningfully engage in philosophical inquiry and provide more consistent support to novice p4c Hawai'i teachers who relied on philoSURFERS' expertise. Many teachers reported that when they tried to do the p4c Hawai'i activities without the philoSURFERS, 'it was not the same.' Even the philoSURFERS suggested a change to the schedule. For example, Lukey recalled a philoSURFER saying in his final presentation at UHM's Uehiro Academy; 'one of the things we learned last year is we can't just accept every class that requests us.'

Due to this feedback, we realised it wasn't productive to spread ourselves so thin, and there was a need for a more regular presence in each classroom. Therefore, in 2018-19 we reduced the number of teachers we supported by working with teachers who were clearly committed to engaging in p4c Hawai'i activities in their classrooms at least once a week and who were responsive in planning and communicating with the philoSURFER team (Miller, Matsukawa & Shiroma 2019). According to Matsukawa and Shiroma, once we concentrated on supporting 23 teachers on a weekly basis, we witnessed a dramatic increase in the effectiveness of the Project; the relationships between the philoSURFERS and the students and teachers were enhanced, which aided them in their efforts to use p4c Hawai'i to encourage deep philosophical thinking in these classroom communities.

In the second year (2022-23) of the philoSURFERS at SBES, Fox's students are providing similar feedback. For example, in their final reflection of the year, the philoSURFERS' overwhelming feedback was to visit classrooms on a weekly basis, rather than the current biweekly schedule.<sup>8</sup> Their feedback mirrors observations from previous years of the Project, and Fox intends to strive for the weekly schedule that Matsukawa and Shiroma found to be effective.<sup>9</sup>

However, scheduling is immensely difficult, even with a reduced number of teachers. For instance, matching the KHS schedule with elementary and middle school schedules, in addition to finding transportation, continues to be a difficult task. Even at SBES, where the philoSURFERS support classrooms on campus, it is arduous to find times that work for both the philoSURFERS' school schedules and lower elementary school classrooms. While challenging, we learned the scheduling typically works itself out due to the value all parties see in the Project and the consistent communication among a smaller group of dedicated teachers.

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<sup>8</sup> Fox created the biweekly schedule both to respond to demand, but also to accommodate scheduling constraints with elementary school students.

<sup>9</sup> Students also provided feedback that reflected their understanding of multileveled students learning together. Many remarked that first graders were philosophical thinkers that constantly "blew their minds" with new ideas or questions. They also noted their emergence as leaders on campus and identified their growth in understanding of what it means to think philosophically for a peer younger than them.

***Lesson 3: Communication and a shared vision of success are deeply important among all stakeholders***

There is an amazing amount of power and complexity that lies in a project co-facilitated by educators and administrators from seven elementary schools, two intermediate schools, a high school, and a university. A project requiring so much collaboration among stakeholders from various levels and institutions is rare, which can result in a bureaucratic mess. But we found what brought each partner to this Project is what provides a path to its success: a deep commitment to the long-term growth of p4c Hawai'i; placing value on the creation of a K-12 philosophical schooling experience; and a strong belief in the philoSURFERS as being a worthwhile endeavour that strongly aids in fulfilling their vision of education beyond the four walls of the classroom.

However, due to this complexity, communication has been a major factor in determining the success of the philoSURFERS. At the start, communication with the philoSURFERS, as well as the collaborating teachers, was difficult to navigate and we learned we needed a solid, simple way to communicate. Without consistent communication, we found all parties were unprepared, and students' experiences with philosophy suffered as a result. For instance, we initially relied on the KHS philoSURFERS to take the initiative to communicate with their host teachers, but this proved to be too great of an expectation for this particular group of teens (Miller, Nichols & Shiroma 2017). Matsukawa and Shiroma addressed this issue by initiating dialogue between teachers and philoSURFERS to get everyone on the 'same page.' This allowed hosting teachers to develop a specific plan for their class, Project Coordinators to prepare philoSURFERS with the plan, and philoSURFERS to be successful in helping execute the plan in each classroom they supported. This change in communication eventually resulted in the birth of a shared philoSURFER email account to aid in the communication with each teacher. According to Matsukawa, this provides a channel of communication for both philoSURFER Project Coordinators to be aware of what is happening with each philoSURFER in each classroom, and it gives all participating teachers one consistent point of contact; 'we know how to prepare the philoSURFERS through checking the emails and our Google Drive. It also gives us a central place to house our curriculum and lessons developed for and by the philoSURFERS.'

Interestingly, Fox has her fifth and sixth grade philoSURFERS initiate this communication by coordinating time after school on Thursdays for them to meet with

their host teacher and develop a plan for the next week. Fox follows up with her colleagues, but the primary onus of the communication rests on the philoSURFERS. According to Fox, both her students and teachers shared that this communication has been effective, but not perfect, as some interns need extra coaching on how to communicate with their host teacher. For example, in one case a philoSURFER did not communicate with their homeroom teacher that they would be missing class (on a day they had a test) to lead a p4c inquiry in a second grade classroom. This resulted in this philoSURFER missing their scheduled support with their host teacher. Fox sees these 'failures' as opportunities to learn because it helps interns realise that they are responsible for clear communication with an adult who relies on their p4c 'expertise'. Fox also said their weekly after-school reflections provide philoSURFERS the space to recognise what went wrong so it doesn't happen again.

We also learned another factor in communication lies in clearly articulating the expectation of each role: the role of the teacher, philoSURFERS, philoSURFER Project Coordinators, and the Philosopher in Residence. At the onset of the Project, Miller disseminated to teachers a document with the expectations of each role, but we learned this did not translate into a clear understanding of each role, particularly the role of the philoSURFERS. For instance, in the second year of the Project, Miller and Shiroma found some teachers saw the philoSURFERS as 'resource' teachers (i.e. art, physical education, music) and removed themselves from the activity or left the room altogether, turning over teaching and classroom management responsibilities to the philoSURFERS. These high school students have no formal training in classroom management, which proved to be a major problem because in these situations the philoSURFERS were unable to fulfil their duties, which led directly to fatigue and unhappiness among the philoSURFERS (Miller, Nichols & Shiroma 2017; Miller 2018). The purpose of the philoSURFER has always been to support classroom teachers in making p4c Hawai'i a pedagogical practice of their own. As a result, Matsukawa, Shiroma and Fox now make a concerted effort to clearly inform teachers of the duties and expectations of each role prior to stepping foot into their classrooms in the upcoming school year, which has reduced the confusion we experienced early on in the Project.

In conjunction with communication and expectations, planning and preparedness proved to be a challenge from the beginning. For instance, each philoSURFER has proven to be a skilful philosopher, but these young people do not have a nuanced understanding or past experiences to develop lesson or unit plans to effectively implement the activity of philosophy into a classroom (which is something many of

the teachers we support also struggle with). Needless to say, it is a challenge for philoSURFERS to develop a strategic, scaffolded, and flexible learning plan grounded in philosophical inquiry. To address this, the philoSURFER Project Coordinators provide the philoSURFERS a template to create a lesson plan with a clear beginning to build or maintain the intellectually safe community of inquiry, a meaningful and rigorous middle grounded in doing philosophy, and a purposeful reflective ending. This requires the Project Coordinators and the philoSURFERS to collaborate with their host teachers who are in various stages of developing their use of p4c Hawai'i, from novice to mature.

Like Fox and the SBES philoSURFERS, the KHS philoSURFERS developed a scope and sequence rooted in the tools for thinking and reasoning, similar to those found in Jackson's (2001) *Good Thinker's Toolkit*, and created an outline for each day that is modified based on the specific needs and areas of focus of each classroom. For example, many teachers share the topics each class is studying in order to provide meaningful opportunities for their students to engage in philosophical inquiry with the subject matter of the class. Upon re-examining many of the lessons the philoSURFERS produced over the years, Matsukawa noted that nearly every lesson introduces and/or reinforces these thinking skills and many do so within a specialised content area. For instance, Matsukawa found,

In a seventh-grade health class, they were able to share what kinds of topics would be covered and our students would come up with a stimulus and discuss questions or activities for the students to participate in. We were also able to use the *Good Thinker's Toolkit* in an art class to help students to dig deeper into the possible philosophical implications of the artwork they were observing and producing.

Additionally, many of the elementary schools the philoSURFERS support utilise p4c Hawai'i as a way to philosophically engage in the school's social emotional learning curriculum. For instance, Shiroma said Scarlett Lewis' *Choose Love* curriculum (<https://legacy.chooselovemovement.org>) was 'THE content that nearly every teacher we worked with was utilising as the stimulus for p4c inquiries.' The aim was to use the activity of philosophy to dive deeper into various themes of the curriculum, which resulted in the philoSURFERS facilitating a number of inquiries around improving relationships, building confidence, and developing a sense of self.



***Lesson 4: Children can effectively serve the aims of a Philosopher in Residence***

The philoSURFER Internship Project aimed not only to change teaching practices to be more inclusive of philosophical inquiry, but also the culture of learning in classrooms, schools, and even entire K-12 complexes. The early challenges might have made us think that philosophers under the age of 18 didn't have enough authority or professional experience to lead these innovations, but our initial insight about the effectiveness of KHS philosophers showed that, with the right support and focus, students can be effective philosophers in residence.

For instance, once we realised the importance of working with classroom teachers who are deeply committed to bringing p4c Hawai'i into their classrooms and are open to learning with and from children and young adults, philoSURFERS were able to aid K-12 teachers and students in developing increased knowledge and understanding of p4c Hawai'i. In fact, many of the teachers we support view the philoSURFERS, even the SBES fourth to sixth grade interns, as thoughtful collaborators and 'mentors' who have increased their knowledge and experience of philosophy's place in their teaching practice. The philoSURFERS themselves report seeing significant gains in their understanding of p4c as well. For instance, we have philoSURFERS who participate in the Project for multiple semesters and years remark on how they learned to participate in and lead any discussion, regardless of the participants' age or context. According to Matsukawa, when these individuals sign up to be a philoSURFER again, they choose a new area of focus for themselves at the start of the class in order to push themselves further in their facilitation skills.

Additionally, we learned that when p4c Hawai'i is introduced on a campus, teachers often understand it to be merely a set of strategies and activities to promote inquiry, and not necessarily a pedagogy. This remains the case in some of the classrooms we support, but those instances have decreased as the number of teachers who have shifted into using p4c Hawai'i as a pedagogy has increased. For example, rather than coming in to simply be another set of thinkers, the philoSURFERS and the philoSURFERS Project Coordinators now collaborate with teachers to develop plans and, in some cases, entire units, directly tied to their developmental and curricular aims. This has led teachers to utilise p4c Hawai'i, even without the support of the philoSURFERS, to promote inquiry into the topics their students are exploring. What started as a practice initiated by the philoSURFERS can be found in a number of teachers' lessons because, as one teacher shared with Matsukawa and Shiroma,

'philosophy became more of a natural fit' due to her ongoing work with the philoSURFERS (Miller, Matsukawa & Shiroma 2019, p. 3).

According to the KHS philoSURFERS' final public presentations at each of the Biannual philoSURFER Colloquia, held at UHM's Uehiro Academy, an ongoing theme is that philoSURFERS leave the Internship with a heightened ability to think philosophically in a variety of contexts. PhiloSURFERS consistently detail the growth and expansion of their thinking due to having the privilege of being able to help others expand their thinking at such a young age. Furthermore, the philoSURFERS regularly identify the joy they experience in doing p4c Hawai'i because not only are they helping others develop their thinking process, but thinking with young children sometimes even changes their own perspectives and thoughts on meaningful topics and issues in their lives outside of school.

Teacher-leaders continue to emerge each year of the Project and we can infer more p4c Hawai'i 'experts' will emerge at each school as the philoSURFERS continue their work. Teachers report that they've gained more confidence in their practice and have learned new ways to implement p4c Hawai'i by working with the philoSURFERS. Further evidence of these emerging leaders lies in the other projects initiated by the teachers who the philoSURFERS support. For example, a Kailua Intermediate teacher started Philosophy for Teachers (p4t), an after school 'professional community of inquiry' model designed to provide interested teachers an introduction into p4c by 'doing' it together. Additionally, a Maunawili teacher continues to use p4c Hawai'i as an approach to mathematics instruction and hosts visitors, including professors from UHM's School of Teacher Education, to share her practice with others looking to bring philosophy into math. Teachers at Waimānalo, Enchanted Lake, SBES and Ka'elepulu Elementary Schools, and KHS continue to host professional development opportunities and find ways to share p4c Hawai'i with the larger community. While not classroom teachers, Miller and Lukey have also witnessed philoSURFERS become p4c leaders and experts in their own right. For example, one KHS philoSURFER started an afterschool p4c club for students to engage in philosophical thinking with their peers outside of school. Another KHS philoSURFER helped resurrect the Waimānalo School-wide p4c WE>I Day, which gave birth to the philoSURFERS years before. Aptly, both philoSURFERS were inspired by working with KHS philoSURFERS while they were students in intermediate school.

The philoSURFERS' impact on each campus culture is difficult to measure, but reflecting on what has taken place since their inception helps provide some possible

assessments. For instance, when Miller and Lukey enter a classroom at any one of these schools and students are asked to sit in a circle, be intellectually safe, use a community ball, pose 'juicy wonderings', and think deeply, these are no longer the foreign concepts they were a decade ago. This is because many of the students have encountered p4c Hawai'i and/or the philoSURFERS in previous years. While many of the teachers we have supported through the years continue to practice p4c Hawai'i, teacher turnover has brought inexperienced p4c practitioners to each campus. However, since their students have previous experiences in p4c Hawai'i, the new teachers have the opportunity to try p4c Hawai'i. We've witnessed students carry novice p4c Hawai'i teachers and help them develop the skills, strategies and confidence to utilise p4c Hawai'i as a pedagogy. Also, p4c Hawai'i has been embraced by many administrations as a way to engage faculty during meetings and professional development, as well as communication with families.

Lastly, the larger educational world has taken notice of the philoSURFERS. From August 2016 to May 2023, 215 visitors, including 131 foreign visitors, ranging from university students, K-12 teachers and administrators, and scholars, visited the philoSURFERS in order to learn how to support a K-12 philosophical schooling experience, which the philoSURFERS have helped cultivate.

***Lesson 5: How we can better support the current and future opportunities of the students who serve as philoSURFERS***

Maybe one of the most profound lessons we learned is the impact the Project has on the philoSURFERS themselves. The original aims of the Project were all striving to achieve external objectives, namely, aid the growth of p4c Hawai'i in our public schools. However, we realised relatively early on that there was a rather dramatic evolution happening with philoSURFERS in each semester; their growth as thinkers, facilitators, leaders, and (most importantly) people, could clearly be seen in those philoSURFERS we came into contact with on a daily basis. For example, in some of their reflections, many philoSURFERS remarked on the way p4c Hawai'i changed the manner in which they engage with others, both in and out of school. They leave the philoSURFER experience feeling more capable of communicating with a wide range of people, including young children, on a variety of important topics. They also become more open to hearing other people's opinions when it comes to conflicting ideas, which are all things many of the philoSURFERS say they struggled with previously. It should be noted the philoSURFER Project has always been inclusive of students from a variety of backgrounds, as there have been special education, English

Language Learners, general education, and Advanced Placement students who have all been philoSURFERS.

Many philoSURFERS identified the way the Project has influenced the manner they approach living. For instance, very often they report that their experiences have taught them how to work with people around them, including adults in positions of power (i.e. teachers). Also, their understanding of the philosophical capabilities of others; 'I learned anyone can be a philosopher, as long as they can remain open minded and keep wondering' is a common statement we hear and a sentiment that rests at the core of the p4c Hawai'i movement. Through this academic reflection, Miller, Matsukawa, and Shiroma recalled a comment made by a male philoSURFER in one of our weekly reflections. He said he enjoyed p4c and being a philoSURFER because it allowed him to 'look at things the way he looked at them', rather than to adopt what others wanted him to 'see'. To express his point, he gave the example of a knife, which he thought could be used for so many things, while many others may think it is only good for slicing something. His analogy was intended to highlight his growing understanding that more than one answer or viewpoint could be given for any question, and his 'nontraditional' views and perspectives were valued in his experiences with p4c, which was not necessarily the case in other contexts. Needless to say, these 'ahas' led to supporting the philoSURFERS in increasing their confidence, thinking and knowledge, in addition to developing their leadership, decision-making, facilitation and collaboration skills as an integral aim of the Project.

### *Lesson 6: A university extends beyond its campus*

While the dedication of university faculty time and energy to a project serving K-12 teachers and students might seem outside the scope of typical faculty duties, we found the philoSURFER Internship Project served UHM in several ways. First, the philoSURFER Boot Camp, reflections and classroom support serve as valuable resources for UHM pre-service teachers in the College of Education (COE) and other UHM students interested in K-12 philosophy, particularly when it is used as a pedagogy. Not only could UHM students experience this approach to teaching and learning 'live', the resources developed are shared through the UHM COE and Uehiro Academy, thus contributing to the preparation and training of UHM students. Second, the philoSURFER Internship Project furthered partnerships with other educational researchers. Many visiting researchers took the Project model back to their home institutions (e.g. at Miyagi University of Education in Japan, or the University of Regensburg in Germany) to develop similar projects in collaboration with UHM

faculty. Thus, the philoSURFER Project has contributed to the scholarly research activities of UHM faculty. Finally, the significant impact the Project has made on the larger Kailua community contributes to UHM's goal of becoming a Native Hawaiian place of learning (as outlined in the UHM 2015-25 Strategic Plan). Involvement with the Project promotes intergenerational interdependent relationships, fosters a sense of responsibility to others, and raises awareness of UHM's presence and contributions within our communities. We have observed more UHM undergraduates from the schools that the Project has supported (one philoSURFER recently became an elementary school teacher in Hawai'i), and also more teachers enrol in UHM graduate programs and classes. We also observed that Kailua High School philoSURFERS who go on to other universities take their experiences with this UHM initiative with them, increasing the visibility of UHM at the universities they attend. Thus, we have found involvement with the philoSURFER Internship Project has directly contributed to the university teaching, research and service duties of higher education faculty.

### **Conclusion: Advice for other organisations planning to undertake a similar project**

If others were to undertake a similar project, we would advocate for them to start with a small cohort of highly interested and committed teachers and build out from there. It's important to experience success early on, as well as having the ability to revise and reimplement as needed. In order for this to occur, all parties—including every philoSURFER—must be invested and striving to meet the same aims. More isn't always better, especially in the first years of an innovative project like this, when not all interested teachers are necessarily invested in philosophical inquiry as a meaningful pedagogical practice.

We'd also encourage future philoSURFER Coordinators to be open to revision and change, and collaboration. The philoSURFERS typically come into the Project with little experience in engaging in philosophical activity with young children. We realised that the typical activities utilised in the upper elementary and high school classrooms were not finding the same success in lower elementary classrooms. Keeping the main pillars of p4c Hawai'i in mind (community, inquiry, philosophy and reflection) (Jackson 2013), we worked with classroom teachers, as well as UHM COE and Uehiro Academy faculty, to revise the manner in which we educate and 'train' the philoSURFERS and, as our reflections indicate, it made a huge difference. The philoSURFERS are much more willing to improvise and explore lessons to engage young children in the major aspects of p4c Hawai'i.

Lastly, we encourage future philoSURFER Coordinators to not lose sight of the aims of the Project. When managing projects within and across schools, especially at public institutions, it is easy to focus solely on the logistical and management tasks, which can become exhausting and uninspiring. Remembering and regularly revisiting the larger aims of the Project can help coordinators balance the important and the urgent. Thus, the processes of decision-making and revision are more likely to be guided by goals shared across stakeholders rather than by logistical or bureaucratic challenges.

When we started the philoSURFER Internship Project, we were unaware of any program or project utilising children as Philosophers in Residence with the aim of creating a more philosophical public schooling experience. Each day our philoSURFERS work with teachers and students we continue to learn and hope our example not only serves as a model for others, but sets a bar for how universities and schools can support teachers in making philosophy the living classroom practice that Lipman believed it could be (1988). As noted, visitors from all over the world have come to Hawai'i to learn from the philoSURFERS, and we hope similar ideas will soon be sprouting in other parts of the globe because, as Miller and Lukey (2019) stated, 'our society desperately needs citizens and, therefore teachers, who can reason well, who are deeply moved by the vision of a life in which people reason together, and who feel intensely that they want to live their lives in such a way that being reasonable will genuinely matter' (p. 579). From our perspective, philoSURFERS and other young people fulfilling similar roles in the future play a major role in achieving this aim.

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