



Alaka'i O Kaua'i Welcomes National Experts in Project-Based Learning

KOLOA – Alaka'i O Kaua'i, a free public charter school in Kahili Mountain Park serving kindergarten through eighth grade keiki, is welcoming veteran educators Dr. Thom Markham and Dr. Angie Nastovska to guide the school's project-based and social-emotional learning initiatives.

Project-based learning, or PBL, is at the core of the school's mission, according to Dr. Kani "DrB" Blackwell, who was instrumental in launching the school last year and is Alaka'i's most recent governing board chair. The PBL approach to education equips students to tackle deeply engaging projects about real-world issues that require critical thought, inquiry, and synthesis. It requires students to accept feedback, create solutions, and present their findings in a way that prepares them for the challenges of a 21st century, global economy. Projects culminate in Presentations of Learning, or POLs, where students present the project process to their peers, teachers, community members, parents, and authentic audience – just like employees do in the real world.

"Our school's educational philosophy is premised on nurturing the whole child and on blending academic rigor with meaningful engagement, sustained inquiry, and social-emotional learning principles," DrB said. "This revolutionary model helps our keiki learn essential collaboration, academic and problem-solving skills, and we are so fortunate to have experts like Thom and Angie on our team."

Dr. Markham is the world-renowned founder and CEO of PBL Global and has authored two best-selling books on project-based learning: [*Redefining Smart: Awakening Students' Power To Reimagine Their World*](#), and [*Project Based Learning Design and Coaching Guide: Expert Tools for Innovation and Inquiry for K-12 Educators*](#). A psychologist, author, and keynote speaker, Markham has spent 25 years in the field of project-based learning and is widely considered one of the movement's pioneering voices. He has worked with more than 350 schools and in excess of 6,000 educators to implement project-based learning principles across the world. Dr. Markham is an advisory board member of iLEAD Schools Development, which is working with Alaka'i to develop curriculum and infrastructure for the school's site in Koloa.

Dr. Angie Jasna Nastovska, a veteran educator with more than 14 years of experience, currently serves as Director of Humanities and Innovation for iLEAD Schools. She has designed, coordinated, and overseen International Baccalaureate programs, is a certified IB teacher, and is an expert in project-based and proficiency/competency-based learning. She holds degrees in



early childhood education, curriculum instruction and assessment, and English language and literature, an administrative credential, and a PhD in educational leadership.

“At iLEAD Schools, we maintain a unique emphasis on using methods that foster our learners’ social-emotional development,” Dr. Nastovska said. “We’re committed to ensuring our Alaka’i students learn how to lead, how to be self-directed, and how to develop their own emotional IQ, and our project-based, social-emotional, and deeper learning principles are an integral part of that process.”

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About iLEAD Schools

iLEAD Schools, celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, is a network of charter schools throughout California, Hawaii and the Midwest. iLEAD empowers learners to become conscientious, compassionate, and responsible citizens of the world, and inspires them to become creative thinkers and leaders with a lifelong love of learning.

The iLEAD learning model promotes individualized instruction, active learning methods and opportunities for self-directed learning. The organization celebrates and fosters each child’s individuality, and supports them in discovering their highest potential in the environment which best suits their learning needs.