Details

The Importance of Place-Based Instruction in Education with Whitney Aragaki -197
In this episode, 2022 Hawai‘i State Teacher of the Year Whitney Aragaki joins to unpack the term "place-based instruction" and delve into how to put this important pedagogy into action with students. You'll hear about activity ideas and resources to get started with place-based instruction plus opportunities for integrating EdTech to make this happen!

Link to live show notes: https://classtechtips.com/2023/01/10/place-based-instruction-197/

* Place-Based Instruction

Introduction

Happy New Year (if you're listening to this when it goes live) and welcome back to another new episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast!

And if this is your first time listening in, I'm so glad you're here!

My name is Monica Burns – I'm a former NYC public school teacher and started the Easy EdTech Podcast in 2019 to share my tips, tricks and strategies for technology integration. You'll hear stories from my time in the classroom, the work I do now with schools and districts, and my travels to different EdTech events.

Each episode of the podcast is designed to give you ideas you can try yourself, share with a colleague, or bookmark for later in the school year — and my website classtechtips.com/podcast has all of the show notes and resources from today's episode. If you're listening to this episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or Google Podcasts, or another podcast player you'll see the show notes link in the description, too.

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Today's Intro

This week's episode is titled: The Importance of Place-Based Instruction in Education with Whitney Aragaki. *Whitney is the 2022 Hawai‘i State Teacher of the Year and National Teacher of the Year Finalist, and her teaching focuses around place-based instruction which we'll talk about in today's episode. Let's dive into the conversation.*

Episode Transcript

Monica Burns:
Welcome to the podcast, Whitney. I'm so excited to have you today to talk about all things place-based pedagogy and the EdTech connection. But before we jump in, can you share a bit about your role in education and what your day to day looks like?

Whitney Aragaki:
Aloha. My name is Whitney Aragaki. I am a classroom teacher in Waiākea High School in Hilo, on the east side of Ho, Hawaii Island, where right now Malo is erupting for the first time in 38 years. As a science teacher, I'm so excited about this and it's great because I get to talk about it in biology, AP environmental science class, and as well in our Public Services Academy work-based learning course. Every afternoon I transition to my work as a teacher leader, being a new teacher mentor on campus, and also leading initiatives like leading professional development for teachers across the state in the evening. I am a PhD candidate with, at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in the curriculum and instruction pathway. I'm currently working on my dissertation looking at student science identity from a local context.

Monica Burns:
That's fantastic. Thank you so much, Whitney, for sharing your background and the work that you're doing, and it's definitely been an interesting time. Right. As we talk about the topics that you cover, I was thinking about our conversation earlier today, and I took AP Environmental Science in high school, and it was one of my most memorable classes that I come back to all the time when talking with people just about different topics that are, are present in front of mind. And you know, today we're talking about the intersections of place-based pedagogy and EdTech. For listeners who may not be familiar with this term, what exactly is place-based pedagogy?

Whitney Aragaki:
Yeah. Place-based pedagogy is the ability to create lessons and create learning experiences for students based in our places. So that could be geographically, that could be culturally, that could be anything in which we are tied to certain places in our life. For me, places that have transformed me include the diverse geography of HA Hawaii Island, but also the local swimming pool where I spent my days as a swimmer in high school. Places like Alaska where I did my science pair research, or even places where I used to hang out with my friends after school. These places are all things that transform us, and so when I think about how I develop

experiences for students, I think about how those, their learning is always transformed by places that they engage in on a daily basis and sometimes on a not so daily basis.

Monica Burns:
I'm so glad that you gave those examples that just help listeners understand that these can be spaces that we don't think much of, right. Or we don't think maybe they're worth talking about, or they're just so every day for us, but because they're so every day for us, they can really have an impact on the way that we see the world. And, you know, as we jump into this connection to educational technology, you know, what are some of the intersections between place-based pedagogy and EdTech?

Whitney Aragaki:
You know, as we continue to utilize EdTech, we're seeing that place has a definite role in how educational technology works. Just thinking about our experiences through the pandemic, our students were utilizing educational technology every day. Whether they're sitting in front of a laptop or a Chromebook, they're doing their work. I was able to deepen, hopefully deepen their sense of place during that time because they were all at home. Yeah. And typically one of those spaces that they know very intimately, so having them go outside during a biology lesson, Hey, can you go outside? Can you do some deep and intentional observations? Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, what do you hear? What do you see? What, what smells conjure up some memories? All of these things are now informing our ability to observe from a biological concept context. And then can you report that back? What's great is that they were able to report it back because they could share pictures, they could share recordings, they could share what was the newest social media platform at that time.

Whitney Aragaki:
You know, they could share anything through the multiple things. I'm thinking, right, now's be real, right? But all these things I could, I could latch onto and say, Hey, can you just share your screen? And now we know exactly what's happening in everyone's specific places. So it's super in individualized for every student, yet they're all learning from each other in that way. So I can see EdTech kind of just blossoming out. So all these things that we have now at our, at our fingertips, the abilities to make videos, the abilities to capture audio and visuals, and then, you know, share it out. We're, we're capturing stories, we're capturing memories, we're capturing innovations and we're able to learn from each other.

Monica Burns:
Yeah. And just that idea of capturing things and sharing, you know, different pieces. I'm, I'm so glad you mentioned that. Be real piece too, right? When you think about you're physically in a space and that social media app is really about what you're doing in that moment and where

you are, right? Both the selfie screen and the out in the world view. So, so many ways that students can capture their learning when they're out in the field doing observations, you know, and I'm curious, as we think about some of these pieces you mentioned just even smelling right? Something and, you know, one of my favorite classroom memories, I taught fifth grade for, for a number of years, and we composted in our classroom in the middle of New York City, and then we went to Central Park Zoo. And we like walked into one of these, I guess I forget the exact room, it might have been like the Rainforest room. I'm doing air quotes here. And one of my kids said, this smells just like our compost bin. I was like, yes, <laugh>, right? This is what we're going for. Right? These kind of conversations. And so I'm curious if you have a favorite classroom story to share, maybe even where technology, you know, helped further one of your goals?

Whitney Aragaki:
One of my favorite lessons to do with my students is to have them interview an adult. So at the end of every unit, whatever unit is, we kind of focus in on one aspect and how science can be informed by generational knowledge. So at the beginning of the year, we kind of, we do things like, what does science mean to you? Or Where do you learn science? So that they're interviewing adults. And then I can kind of see who is informing what is informing every student coming into my classroom so that if, if I'm getting pushback, if I'm getting, or if I even need a guest speaker, I can like latch onto these people because they're already supporting our classroom. And one of the activities that we do a little bit later in the year is, what is your va? So what is your treasured place?

Whitney Aragaki:
So we ask student, I ask students like, oh, go out and interview a, a parent a teacher, auntie, uncle, whoever, but what's their treasured place? Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>. And so we come back with these beautiful stories of like, this is my treasured place. This is what it means to me. This is what it looks like. This is what it smells like. And sometimes the students, when they have to do their reflections, they say, oh, I've never been to that place, or, I don't actually know what they're talking about. I'm just kind of transcribing. And so we take that information and we can utilize GIS and as we kind of technology and map it across ho Hawaii islands so we can see where all these treasured places are. Then we're able to look at what are, what are the patterns that we see? Are they around ocean landscapes?

Whitney Aragaki:
Are they up the mountain? Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, are they places that have had reset lava flows? Can we access these places? What are the, what are the implications of pollution or the implications of building on certain lands that might affect our, our treasured places? So all these things, I think it, it really brings together this idea of we're taking information from our

families, we're utilizing technology and we're seeing how it maps onto our ho Hawaii island topography mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. And then what are actionable steps can we do to ensure that these places are protected so that the next generation who asks us about our bapa, we can still share it with them physically.

Monica Burns:
Wow. I love just the combination of the interview piece, the thinking about the treasured places and having that visual to look at all the connections and, and all the different action items that might go along with that, that, you know, that extra layer of utilizing technology, you know, can come into play. So, you know, as we're thinking forward into 2023, which kind of sounds like space years for me, every time that I say <laugh> these years keep adding, it seems like something from a television show, you know, but what are some of the ways that you are hoping to leverage technology when working with students, you know, moving into the new calendar year or maybe something that's on even your wishlist of ways that EdTech would further your mission around place-based pedagogy.

Whitney Aragaki:
Oh, so many things. I think that I'm kind of wrestling with this idea currently about access to information. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> educational technology has allowed us to be everywhere all at once. You know, the ability to see the pyramids in Egypt or the ability to, to walk on the streets of Rome in, in different time periods. And this, this technology that is at our students' fingertips is so beautiful. And yet I wonder about the access to so much treasured information. What I mean by that is that, you know, sometimes I have my students go on museum websites and I say, oh, can you look at some artifacts? Let's compare some things. And I, in recent years, we have been having these more frequent conversations about how did museums acquire these artifacts

Monica Burns:
Mm-Hmm.

Whitney Aragaki:
<Affirmative> for indigenous communities, for underserved communities. And so, so many, so many times that people have acquired traditional indigenous artifacts inappropriately

Monica Burns:
Yeah. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Whitney Aragaki:

And so then I, while I'm having my students engaged, you know, I kind of stop them and say like, can we think about this first? Let's stop, let's pause and intentionally do that. And so many of them are like, it's just the internet. It's fine. It's not like we're not actually touching it, we're not doing it. And so much so now we're seeing that the internet and our regular lives are, are combining at such a speed that we don't know what is digital and we don't know what is analog sometimes anymore. It's so intertwined. And so whenever we engage the artifacts, regardless of where they're from, we have to stop and do some protocol and to recognize the histories behind this to recognize the peoples that these artifacts were taken from. And so now thinking through EdTech and the ability to access locations with place-based pedagogy, how are we developing protocols so that we are in the right mindset, the right the right thoughts, the right action when we access places through EdTech. So I'd like to see in 2023, kind of a, a surge of, of thoughtfulness, a surge of protection almost on these places that are so special and so treasured to us.

Monica Burns:
Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Yeah. No, I'm so glad that you mentioned that Whitney, and I really appreciate just that context for thinking, you know, we might have certain conversations before entering a physical space, right? Or we might think through those things or, or have a protocol in place when we are physically someplace. But in those digital moments, we are interacting with content in a way where we have an opportunity for some really deep discussions as well. So if a listener wants to learn more about place-based education, are there resources that you would recommend for them to explore?

Whitney Aragaki:
Absolutely. Place-based education looks different in different contexts. One, one resource that I'm learning from and actively participating in is the 2892 project. This project was built by Ashley Lamb-Sinclair , and she is the 2016 Kentucky Teacher of the Year. And she built out this platform to really ensure that students and teachers were hearing histories that had maybe not been told in so many places around the country. So, for example, there's Louisville, Tulsa, Rondo, and Route 66. And those places I've learned so much about place-based on the stories that they can tell through GIS and ESRI mapping. Hav Hawaii is building out their 2892 projects right now where we will be talking about what it looks like when we learn from land and how land can inform where we are, but who we are and who we are together. So it can inform not only our geographic locations, it can inform our identities and how we engage with the community.

Monica Burns:
That's a fantastic recommendation. Yeah. If you got another, keep it coming. <Laugh>,

Whitney Aragaki:
That's the one that I've, okay. Yeah. I'm most proud of at the point, at this point. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, we have been working with National Geographic on some place-based projects as well. We have some blogs that we've been writing about and trying to share that story out in conjunction with 2892 as well.

Monica Burns:
Perfect. And we'll make sure to link out to that resource so listeners can bookmark it and explore it and take a look a little bit more closely at that resource. So Whitney, this has been such a great conversation for thinking about something as big as play space education. With that, you know, intersection of education technology, and I wanna make sure people know where to go to stay connected with you and, and your work. Where's the best way for them to learn more about your work?

Whitney Aragaki:
Yeah, the best place is my website whitneyaragaki.com. I am still on Twitter. My handle is @sayuri_neko, but everything can be linked through my website, so please check me out there.

Monica Burns:
Perfect. And I'll make sure to link that out so listeners can follow along and learn more about your work. Thank you so much for your time today with me.

Whitney Aragaki:
Thank you, Monica.

So let's make this EdTech easy with some key points from the episode…

Interview an adult for generational knowledge.

Describe a treasured place and share digitally.

Utilize GIS and ESRI mapping to tell stories.

Try virtual field trips to make connections.

Remember, you can find the shownotes and the full list of resources from this episode

including all of the ways to connect with Whitney Aragaki on classtechtips.com/podcast and finding today's episode #197!

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Outro

Thank you for tuning into another Tuesday episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast. If you are listening on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, or another favorite app, don't forget to hit the "Follow" button – this way next week's episode will be waiting for you first thing next Tuesday morning.

And if you want to share an idea from the episode with a friend or colleague, text, tweet or post the link on your favorite social media platform – and of course you can tag me @ClassTechTips with any questions!

Episode Resources

- Check out Whitney Aragaki's website & EdSurge articles
- Follow Whitney Aragaki on Twitter & Instagram
- Learn more about the 2892 Project
- How Virtual Field Trips Can Foster Curiosity (Blog Post)
- 3 Social Media Inspired Student Projects (Podcast Episode)
- Helping Students Become Change Makers (Podcast Episode)
- Reasons to Video Conference with an Expert this Year (Podcast Episode)
- How Technology Plays a Role in Environmental Education with Tina Wong (Podcast Episode)
- Exploring the World With Virtual Field Trips [EdTech Essentials Spotlight] (Podcast Episode)
- Help Students Take Ownership of Their Learning with Kendra Grant (Podcast Episode)
- 5 Types of Tech-Friendly Discussions That Promote Collaboration (Podcast Episode)
- What To Do Before You Host a Video Call With a Guest Expert (Podcast Episode)

- Bring Environmental Education to Life with Project-Based Learning with James Fester (Podcast Episode)
- What Productive Struggle Looks Like When Students Use Technology with Peg Grafwallner (Podcast Episode)
- Become a “Hover-Free” Teacher with Choice-Based Instruction with Miriam R. Plotinsky (Podcast Episode)