

# ĀAha Pūnana Leo Priority Enrollment Open for Hawaiian Language Medium Preschools

*ĀAha Pūnana Leo is accepting priority enrollment applications for its Hawaiian language preschools. The priority application period runs through March 1.*

HILO, HI, UNITED STATES, February 5, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- ĀAha Pūnana Leo is currently accepting priority enrollment applications for its Hawaiian language medium preschools for the upcoming school year. The priority application period runs through March 1.

For more than four decades, ĀAha Pūnana Leo has played a foundational role in the revitalization of ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi by supporting families during a child's earliest years of learning. Pūnana Leo programs are designed not simply to teach language, but to educate keiki and ʻŌhana in an environment grounded in Hawaiian values, cultural practice, and a deep relationship to place.

"Hawaiian language is not a destination," said Kaʻiulani Neff Laehā, CEO of ĀAha Pūnana Leo. "It is the vessel. Through the language, families experience culture, community responsibility, and identity as a lived practice, not a subject taught in isolation."

In Pūnana Leo classrooms, Hawaiian language, culture, and daily experience are inseparable. Keiki learn through ʻIke Hawaiʻi in ways that are active and hands-on, supported by cultural learning experiences that deepen their understanding of Hawaiʻi's lands, stories, and traditions. Learning extends beyond the classroom and becomes part of everyday life.

Equally important is the role of ʻŌhana. Pūnana Leo programs support families at varying levels of language familiarity, offering a welcoming and realistic pathway to engage with ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi in ways that feel natural and sustainable. The goal is not perfection, but participation and continuity.

Priority enrollment is open to families with keiki ages 9 months to 5 years. Families are encouraged to apply early, as space is limited and waitlists are common.

To ensure access for families across Hawaiʻi, many Pūnana Leo sites participate in the Preschool Open Doors (POD) program, which provides monthly tuition subsidies to eligible families. This public support helps remove financial barriers and ensures Hawaiian language medium education remains accessible to those who seek it.

“Pūnana Leo is the foundation,” Neff Laehā added. “It is where children, families, and educators come together to build the skills, values, and relationships needed to sustain ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi for generations to come.”

Families interested in enrolling during the priority application period can learn more and apply at [ahapunanaleo.org](http://ahapunanaleo.org).

#### About ʻAha Pūnana Leo

ʻAha Pūnana Leo is a Hawaiʻi-based nonprofit organization dedicated to the revitalization of the Hawaiian language through early childhood education. By supporting keiki, ʻohana, and educators, Pūnana Leo helps build a strong foundation for lifelong Hawaiian language learning and cultural continuity.

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