



## S.O.F.T. and the Noelani First Grade Gardeners

Tiele-Lauren Doudt<sup>1</sup>, Mitchell Loo<sup>1</sup>, Thomas Lim<sup>1</sup>, Kathleen Sturgeon<sup>2</sup>, Lianne Morita<sup>2</sup> & Ted Radovich<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CTAHR, University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa; <sup>2</sup>Noelani Elementary School, Mānoa, Hawaii

### INTRODUCTION

Established in 2007, the Student Organic Farm Training (SOFT) program is a student-managed mini-farm supported by the College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources (CTAHR). Students developed SOFT in order to take an active role in their education, while also creating a physical place to put theory into practice. Participants (SOFTies) engage in a variety of co-curricular learning activities, including: vegetable production, composting, apiculture, egg production, and marketing. SOFT has been integrated into several CTAHR courses, and SOFTies have the opportunity to pass on their knowledge of agriculture to younger students through collaboration with Noelani Elementary School.



### APPROACH



Initiated in 2009, the Noelani First Grade Garden is a place-based education program developed collaboratively by SOFTies and the Noelani Elementary School teachers. Fifty to Sixty students are engaged monthly each semester to produce a “soup” or “pizza” themed garden that is the center piece of an end-of-semester party.

Garden activities center around four

STEM topics:

- Photosynthesis
- Soil
- Nutrition
- Food Safety



### ACTIVITIES

STEM + Agriculture = STEAM. Each semester SOFTies initiate activities with the Noelani first graders to teach the science of agriculture. Throughout the program, students will compare different types of soil,



review plant anatomy, discuss the importance of sunlight and use a light meter to measure light intensity, as well as plant and harvest the ‘soup’ and ‘spaghetti’ gardens. Softies reinforce terms such as ‘germination’ and ‘water retention,’ give lessons on food safety, and invite Dr. “Peabody” by to introduce healthy diet concepts.

**OUTCOMES**

Approximately 420 first grade students to-date have left with an improved awareness of basic plant science and food production, and a total of 190 volunteer hours have been contributed on behalf of SOFTies. SOFTies have reported improved teaching skills and an increased understanding of subject material thanks to the collaboration with the Noelani first graders.

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