

Getting the Word Out: A Look at KS Recruitment Activities

Introduction

Guided by its mission and strategic plan, Kamehameha Schools seeks to serve more Hawaiian families through its educational programs. Accordingly, Kamehameha Schools frequently asks community members for ideas on how to better deliver education to Hawaiians. Community feedback is a vital source of information as Kamehameha Schools seeks to improve its programs and extend its reach to more Hawaiians.

Recruitment activities play an important role in Kamehameha Schools' educational efforts. PASE recently conducted a number of surveys¹ to better understand how applicants respond to KS recruitment initiatives. This report summarizes some of the main findings. Highlights include the following:

- Overall, word of mouth is the most common way applicants receive information about the KS application process.
- Households with higher incomes are more likely to learn about the KS application process through media advertisements and community open houses than are lower-income households.
- Households with lower incomes are most likely to rely on word of mouth for KS application information.
- A variety of recruitment strategies may be appropriate given the differences in socioeconomic characteristics from island to island and within certain regions.

Applicants for Neighbor Island Campuses

PASE conducted a survey to gauge the effectiveness of admissions recruitment initiatives for school year 2003-04 for the Maui and East Hawai'i campuses. A total of 871 surveys were returned (461 from Maui and 410 from Hawai'i). Respondents were asked how they received information about KS applications.

WORD OF MOUTH

Applicants most commonly used word of mouth to learn about the application process on both Maui and Hawai'i. More than two-thirds of respondents (70 percent) said they learned about the application process through friends, relatives or other persons. Applicants also learned about admissions through newspaper advertisements, direct calls to Kamehameha Schools, and radio announcements; however, about one in four applicants relied solely on word of mouth to learn about the application process.

Applicants for Maui and E. Hawai'i Campus: How did you find out Kamehameha Schools was accepting new applications?

Strategies*	Percent of applicants		
	Maui	E. Hawai'i	Total
Friends/relative/other person	69.4	70.5	69.9
Newspaper advertisement	31.1	40.8	35.7
Called KS to find out	39.2	31.3	35.4
Radio announcement	15.5	13.3	14.5
KS community open house	8.8	7.8	8.3
Booth at fair/festival	5.9	3.8	4.9
Movie theater advertisement	1.4	1.0	1.2
Community visit by KS	NA	7.8	NA
Community advertisement	NA	9.8	NA
Church announcement	NA	1.3	NA
Friends/relative/other person only	27	26	26
Newspaper ad only	6	9	7

Source: PASE applicant survey for Maui & Hawai'i campus, school year 2003-2004

* Percentages do not total 100% because respondents checked multiple ways of receiving information. Those who marked only "friends/relative/other person" or "newspaper advertisement" are reported separately in the table above.

FIRST-TIME APPLICANTS

Most applicants for both campuses were first-timers, with only 36 percent of sixth grade applicants and 26 percent of ninth grade applicants having previously applied for admission. Households with a currently enrolled KS student were more likely to call Kamehameha Schools to learn about the application process than were households without an enrolled student (43 percent compared to 36 percent overall). On Maui, new applicants were much less likely than were repeat applicants to get information from newspaper advertisements.

1. The surveys, though similar in nature, did not contain identical questions or response options.

THE MONEY FACTOR

Radio advertisements and community open houses tended to reach households with an annual income of more than \$25,000, whereas lower-income households more often learned about the application process through word of mouth.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ISLANDS

For Maui campus applicants, directly calling Kamehameha Schools was the most common form of learning about the application process aside from word of mouth. For Hawai'i campus applicants, newspaper advertisements were the most common form of learning about the application process besides word of mouth.

Applicants for KS Preschools

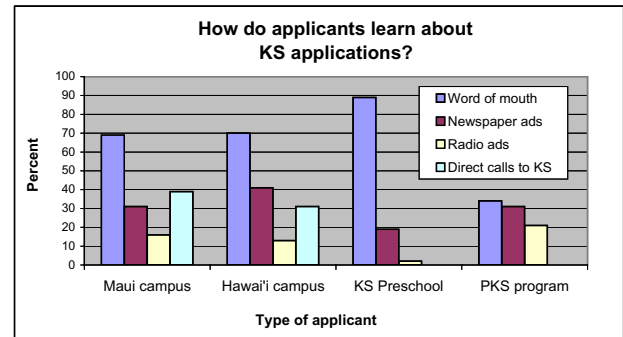
We compare these results to another survey PASE conducted to learn more about preschool applicants for school year 2003-04. A total of 1,164 preschool surveys were returned (679 from O'ahu, 233 from Hawai'i, 130 from Maui, 102 from Kaua'i, and 20 from Moloka'i). In addition to sharing their preferences for preschool locations, respondents indicated how they received information about KS preschool applications.

Overall findings show even more frequent reliance on word of mouth among preschool applicants. Nine out of every ten respondents (89 percent) reported that word-of-mouth recommendations were most commonly used to learn about applying to KS preschools. One in five (19 percent) indicated that they obtained the KS preschool application information through newspaper advertisements.

Applicants for Pauahi Keiki Scholars

In 2002 Kamehameha Schools initiated the Pauahi Keiki Scholars (PKS) program to help ensure quality preschool opportunities for more Hawaiian children. PASE's survey of PKS applicants for school year 2002-03 serves as a third point of comparison for this report. This survey asked parents of applicants how they learned about the PKS program. A total of 131 of 186 (81 percent) responded. Neighbor islands were represented in the applicant pool, although most PKS applicants (85 percent) live on O'ahu.

Thirty-four percent of applicants said they learned about Pauahi Keiki Scholars by word of mouth, compared to 70 percent for neighbor island K-12 applicants and 89 percent for KS preschools. PKS families are relatively well educated and relied more on radio and newspaper advertisements than on word of mouth to learn about the PKS program. School year 2002-03 was the program's first year, which may partially explain why word of mouth was less prevalent as a source of information.



Sources: PASE applicant survey for Maui and Hawai'i campus (SY 2003-04); applicant survey for KS preschools (SY 2003-04); and applicant survey for Pauahi Keiki Scholars (SY 2002-03). Percentages do not always total 100% because respondents indicated multiple ways of receiving information about KS applications, except for PKS applicants, who chose one answer only.

Conclusion

As a learning organization, Kamehameha Schools actively seeks to improve the way it interacts with communities, families, and children. Feedback from stakeholders is important because it gives insights into how to continue to serve the community and deliver quality education to more Hawaiians.

This report suggests that to reach a diverse group of potential applicants, Kamehameha Schools should target a range of communications approaches. For example, applicants for the Maui and Hawai'i campuses learned about KS applications from friends or relatives; KS preschool applicants relied even more heavily on word of mouth. The initial round of PKS applicants, however, appeared to be more receptive to media advertisements. Understanding these communications strategies is especially critical as Kamehameha Schools extends its reach to more Hawaiian families through neighbor island campuses and other educational programs.