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KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS

Pathways to Prosperity through Linked Learning for Native Hawaiians

'A'ohe pau ka 'ike i ka hālau ho'okahi
Not all knowledge is taught in one school
(Pukui 1983, #203)

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Background

The recent publication *Pathways to Prosperity* by the Harvard Graduate School of Education (2011) has focused attention on the limited success of College for All strategies and on the potential for programs that build and support Multiple Pathways to lead to careers that provide living wage jobs. This topic is relevant to the mission of Kamehameha Schools and to discussions of educational engagement, particularly to refining and affirming how Kamehameha Schools defines postsecondary success.

Highlights

Our brief review of information currently available revealed the following key take-away points:

- College for All has increased educational aspirations but has not had the intended impact on the percentage of students completing a college degree.
- Students with limited access to resources may be negatively affected by College for All practices.
- The Multiple Pathways model offers a viable alternative for many students and society *if* it is implemented in ways that avoid the pitfalls of tracking.

Implications

- Although Kamehameha Schools has designated the percentage of learners completing a four-year college degree as a standard measure of success at the *system* level, it is important to track and report the percentages of learners who complete two-year and certificate programs as well.
- Kamehameha Schools may want to increase support for programs and services that provide learners with access to Multiple Pathways that lead to careers that pay a living wage.

Introduction

The recent publication *Pathways to Prosperity* by the Harvard Graduate School of Education (2011) has refocused attention on the limited success of College for All strategies and on the potential for programs that build and support Multiple Pathways to lead to careers that provide living wage jobs. The concept of Multiple Pathways, sometimes referred to as “Linked Learning,” refers to educational strategies that emphasize college and career preparation. Such an approach is relevant to the Kamehameha Schools mission to “create educational opportunities in perpetuity to improve the capability and well-being of people of Hawaiian ancestry.” It is also highly relevant to discussions of educational engagement and refining and affirming how Kamehameha Schools defines postsecondary success.

This report briefly describes some of the key premises behind the Multiple Pathways approach, its promises, and associated challenges. The report ends with a list of considerations for Kamehameha Schools programs and strategic collaborations.

Why consider Multiple Pathways?

The *Pathways to Prosperity* report is based on two facts. First, the U.S. public education system currently falls short of the goal of preparing all adolescents to lead productive and prosperous lives as adults. Second, a bachelor’s degree is not always necessary to enter a career that pays a living wage.

The lack of adequate preparation is most prevalent for minority, indigenous, and economically disadvantaged youth. The *Pathways to Prosperity* report provides a compelling argument for reconsidering how we educate our young people based on future labor market demands, highlights the skills employers require, and identifies strategies for building or strengthening these skills via collaborations between schools and employers and with assistance from the Federal government.

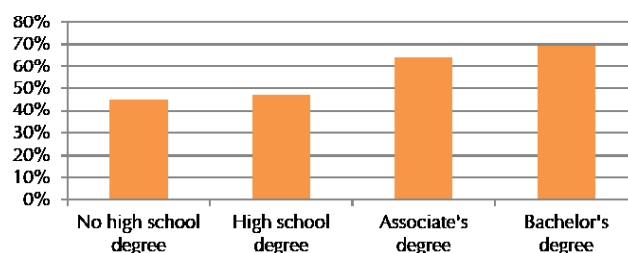
Researchers in a variety of settings regularly forecast demands for labor and skills in Hawai‘i and elsewhere. The State of Hawai‘i Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (2010) predicts that 54 percent of all jobs in the state in 2018 will require at least “moderate term on-the-job training,” including 20 percent of jobs that will require a bachelor’s degree or higher. The Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University (2011b) projects that 58 percent of the jobs in Hawai‘i in 2018 will require some postsecondary education while Brookings Institute projections are as high as 78 percent for the nation (Holzer and Lerman 2009).

Clearly, jobs will exist for adults with a high school education or GED. However, the Center on Education and the Workforce (2011a) reports that nationally just one in three of these jobs pays \$35,000 or higher (150 percent of the Federal Poverty Limit for a family of four, not adjusted for regional differences in the cost of living). By contrast, the Center reports that “middle skill” jobs

(those that require some postsecondary education but less than a bachelor’s degree) typically pay better than \$35,000 per year and that nearly all occupations that require a bachelor’s degree surpass this pay level.

The high cost of living in Hawai‘i makes supporting a family financially with a high school education even more difficult. The living wage¹ for a family of four with two young children in Hawai‘i is about \$63,000 (Glasmeier and The Pennsylvania State University 2011). Recent data from the U.S. Census for Native Hawaiian families with children reveal that less than 45 percent of families where parents attained less than a high school degree earned at least \$63,000. In families where the parents completed a high school degree, 47 percent earned this amount. Families where the parents earned associate’s and bachelor’s degrees fare better, with 64 and 69 percent of these families respectively earning at least \$63,000 (2005–2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2011).

Figure 1. Percent of families earning a living wage for families of four degree attainment.



How can we best prepare young adults for college and career success?

Given the bleak wage outlook for adults with a high school education or less, a meaningful postsecondary credential is critical to the economic well-being of Native Hawaiians. After at least two decades of the United States operating within the College for All paradigm, we have yet to realize significant gains in the percentage of adults who earn at least a bachelor’s degree. Today, “nearly 70 percent of high school graduates nationwide enter college within two years of graduation. But only about 40 percent complete an associate’s or bachelor’s degree by their mid-twenties” (Harvard Graduate School of Education 2011, 6). Among Native Hawaiians, roughly 30 percent of all adults have completed an associate’s degree or higher (2005–2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2011).

College for All

The College for All approach is based on the belief that all students can and should attend college (Rosenbaum 2011). This norm

¹ A living wage is similar to the “minimum earnings threshold” used in the reports from the Center for Education and the Workforce. Glasmeier defines a living wage as “the minimum estimate of the cost of living for low wage families.” In Hawai‘i, a living wage for a two adult/two child family is \$63,124 per year.

maintains that the opportunity for upward mobility should always be open. Beyond the individual's aspirations, College for All is politically popular because constituents believe that it encourages ambition for advancement and raises expectations. However, the College for All approach is increasingly acknowledged as problematic or, at least, failing to meet expectations. As noted in the *Pathways* report, after 20 years and billions of dollars we have seen only marginal gains in college completion rates (Harvard Graduate School of Education 2011, 9).

Rosenbaum believes that the College for All approach is most suitable for younger students who have more time to prepare for college. As students age and have less time to meet the requirements to attend college, this approach does not accommodate alternative pathways. For students who are unprepared to attend college, counselors often encourage them to “apply anyway” or “go to community college first” instead of pursuing vocational training (Rosenbaum 2011, 2001).

While Domina, Conley, and Farkas (2011) found that high educational aspirations have positive effects on the student perception of the utility of education and student effort, they found this relationship was weaker for low-achieving students. Rosenbaum (2011) reports that by fostering in students the expectation that completing college is the only relevant option, the College for All approach renders high school irrelevant in the eyes of some students, which can result in a lack of effort on their part. Further, by foregoing vocational training during or immediately following high school, students who eventually return to vocational training have lost time, some opportunities for career preparation, and income.

Equally compelling is Rosenbaum's finding that focusing primarily on college and foregoing other options is detrimental to students who lack the information or support necessary to succeed in college and thus encounter “predictable failures.” These failures can elicit self-blame and delay or prevent students from pursuing more realistic options with greater confidence in success. Presenting alternative pathways into the workforce earlier in life, such as high-quality career training and technical education, provides a more viable pathway to success for many young people (Rosenbaum 2001).

Multiple Pathways

The authors of the *Pathways to Prosperity* report argue that the College for All approach works *if* it is broadly interpreted to include all forms of postsecondary education and career preparation. However, it is usually interpreted narrowly as denoting at least a bachelor's degree (Harvard Graduate School of Education 2011, 6).

Advocates of Multiple Pathways or Linked Learning believe that these broader approaches have the potential to increase the proportion of young people who obtain a meaningful

postsecondary credential and to avoid some of the pitfalls of College for All. Multiple Pathways or Linked Learning approaches emphasize preparation to succeed in both college and career. They are not intended to reduce rigor or track students away from pursuing a college degree, nor are they one-size-fits-all approaches. Rather, they promote academically rigorous options to students and families that differ in thematic or career focus. Saunders and Chrisman explain that their Linked Learning approach is founded on three research-based propositions:

1. Learning both academic and technical knowledge is enhanced when the two are integrated and contextualized in authentic situations;
2. Connecting academics to real-world contexts promotes student interest and engagement; and
3. Students who gain both academic and career education stand the best chance of accessing the full range of post-secondary options and a solid start toward a personally and socially productive middle class life. (Saunders and Chrisman 2011, 3)

Recommendations within the *Pathways to Prosperity* report include the Linked Learning features described above plus expansion of the role of employers in providing work-based learning. Moreover, the report calls for a new social contract between society and youth that would “extend the scope of the Pell grant program to any post-secondary program that leads to ‘gainful employment in a recognized occupation’” (Harvard Graduate School of Education 2011, 36).

Cultural responsiveness

The Multiple Pathways approach is congruent with traditional Native Hawaiian pedagogy. In Native Hawaiian perspectives, educators apply a multistep process to assess and respond to learners' aptitudes, current levels of achievement, and natural abilities to provide the necessary training to progress in their paths of learning. Should a particular path prove a poor choice, Native Hawaiian custom allowed for assisting the learner to choose another (Beniamina 2010; Pukui, Haertig, and Lee 2001). In her work on “Education with Aloha” Kahakalau explains that the life skills gained through traditional Native Hawaiian pedagogy include those required in today's workforce: critical thinking and problem-solving, an ability to synthesize information, well-developed communication skills, and the ability to work effectively on a team (for example, see Tibbetts, Kahakalau, and Johnson 2007, 150–151).

What are some potential challenges to Multiple Pathways?

While there are various issues related to the Multiple Pathways approach, the primary concern is the potential for reversion to institutional tracking. Institutional tracking provides

students with directed learning opportunities according to their perceived abilities. Although advocates of tracking believe they are acting in the best interest of students by providing access to economic, political, and social opportunities not otherwise available, the practice often does more harm than good. Poor and minority students tend to suffer most from tracking as they are disproportionately denied access to the challenging, engaging, and relevant educational experiences that contribute to enrollment in and graduation from postsecondary institutions. The need for more equitable education and opportunities has fueled the movement to end tracking (Oakes 2005).

A second area of concern is related to changing the way our education system currently operates. Specifically, this entails greater collaboration between educators and future employers and between K–12 and postsecondary educational institutions.

Choice: Genuine, educated, or forced?

On the surface, it may be difficult to distinguish the Multiple Pathways approach from traditional tracking. However, the major difference involves choice: who makes the choices, what choices are available, and whether choices are malleable enough to respond to the increasingly dynamic economic and employment arenas. In a traditional tracking model, students have little to no choice in what track they are assigned, even though those decisions may have profound consequences. In a Multiple Pathways model students have varying degrees of choice.

No matter how much choice the student is given, strong checks and protections must be in place to ensure that student pathway choice is genuine. Like the Native Hawaiian practice of *tēnā* (Beniamina 2010), the process of learning is a multistep one, “with actions and decisions being revisited as new information and understanding is gained” (Saunders and Chrisman 2011). As new knowledge is acquired and new opportunities presented, students should be presented with options that reflect those changes. Equally important is the iterative development of the established pathway. Pathways should be purposeful and allow for change based on the dynamic occupational landscape and economy. The option to change pathways and continuously revisit student choice is especially important earlier in a student’s academic career.

Structural and process issues: Avoiding the pitfalls

A key point to the structural development of pathways identified by Oakes (2005; Grubb and Oakes 2007) is that today’s pathways should not resemble the old non-college bound tracks that traditionally have been designated for poor, minority, and first generation college students. Rather, as a suggestion to protect against this, they state that there should be a “college-as-an-option-for-all” strategy, where pathways or other internal learning communities are supported by “concerted attention to the quality of instruction” (Grubb and Oakes 2007, 28).

This is not to say that simple educational policy changes would

be enough. Saunders and Chrisman (2011) along with Grubb and Oakes (2007) suggest that a Multiple Pathways approach to learning will “work best in the context of a social safety net that include[s] elements such as labor standards, health and housing that address the negative effects of residential segregation, income inequality, and concentrated poverty.” Safety net elements already present in our community that protect against discriminatory practices must function in collaboration with Multiple Pathways policies. While the larger social and structural issues outlined by these authors are beyond the scope of this brief review there are a number of strategies that provide a strong framework for this approach to education.

Beyond reform in the schools, the successful implementations of the Multiple Pathways approaches will rest in part with external partners. Both the authors from Harvard Graduate School of Education (2011) and Saunders and Chrisman (2011) note the importance of employers and trade groups to success. This requires change in the ways employers and schools have interacted in the past. In addition, the Harvard authors call for creating a social compact with our youth that will “spell out what educators, employers and governments will do to provide pathways [to adulthood], and how they will support young people as they navigate them. In addition, it should clarify what we expect from young people” (34).

technical
academic
integrated
knowledge
contextualized
pathway degree
real-world
vocation

What do the experts say?

The National Education Policy Center (NEPC) recommends the following education reforms to encourage the success of Multiple Pathways models (Saunders and Chrisman 2011).

- Increasing understanding and support for new educational structures in schools
- Improving collaboration between K–12 and postsecondary groups
- Investing in curriculum that combines academic and technical education coursework
- Training teachers and other professionals to maximize the use of both academic and Career and Technical Education coursework
- Funding studies supporting the use of Linked Learning
- Creating support for work-based learning opportunities for students

In addition, the Education Policy Research Unit (EPRU) at Arizona State University identifies several critical elements of successful Multiple Pathways models (Grubb and Oakes 2007).

- Establishing a college-preparatory core that provides students with the basic requirements to enter a public university
- Integrating technical education with academic knowledge
- Providing experiences grounded in “real world” work situations
- Ensuring access to a variety of student supports such as supplemental instruction, counseling services, and transportation

The major areas of change necessary for a Multiple Pathways program to succeed can be summarized into three general areas:

1. Multiple Pathways must become valued and supported within the society at large
2. Schools need to offer academic coursework that reflects the current occupational needs of our economy
3. Exposure to and support of Multiple Pathways must begin in schools

What are examples of proven or promising practices?

Examples of organizations outside Hawai‘i that are taking on the

challenge of creating Multiple Pathways include the E3 Alliance, Strive, and the Opportunity Agenda (Harvard Graduate School of Education 2011, 37). In Hawai‘i, some programs are on their way to providing Multiple Pathways to learning opportunities. Running Start is a program sponsored by the University of Hawai‘i designed to give high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to receive college credits. Students may enroll in classes they would not otherwise have the opportunity to take at their own school. This program also provides students that may struggle in a traditional school setting the opportunity to work and learn outside the classroom. MA‘O Organic Farms, on the Leeward coast of O‘ahu, offers an internship program to support youth from the Wai‘anae area in obtaining an associate’s degree from Leeward Community College. Participants also receive valuable work experience in organic farming as well as cultural knowledge of the area, linking their learning in the classroom with their learning on the job. Programs such as these are valuable resources that allow students the opportunity to pursue a traditional college education while also exposing them to opportunities beyond the classroom.

In-school options, such as career academies, can also provide theme-based pathways through high schools, similar to majors or concentrations in postsecondary education. These academies have the potential to create Multiple Pathways. However, they need to go beyond simple restructuring of the ways students are grouped to take advantage of this model. Grubb and Oakes (2007) suggest that effective career academies:

- Provide room for examining the important occupational, political, and social issues of adult life in the process of teaching disciplinary subjects
- Offer multiple ways for students to graduate ready for both college and work, not one or the other
- Prepare students for civic participation by embedding the curriculum in the workings of social institutions as well as workplaces (26)

To do this, career academies must create pathways attractive to a broad range of students and promote fluid versions of requirements to support integrated curricula that make the pathways coherent. They require assessments aligned with new, alternative conceptions of rigor and do this in concert with postsecondary institutions, employers, and civic organizations. Career academies must also apply concerted attention to the quality of instruction, moving teachers toward constructivist or student-centered pedagogy through the use of professional learning communities (Grubb and Oakes 2007, 27–28).

While there are a few programs incorporating some type of Multiple Pathways model, there is definitely a need for more. It is the hope of many that our country will one day undergo complete educational reform and adopt a broader vision of success that is not limited to four-year college graduation. Though a reform of

this scale may not be reasonable right now without the requisite social and government support, we can influence change by supporting programs like Running Start and MA'O Organic Farms and effective career academies.

What are the implications for Kamehameha Schools?

The Multiple Pathways model holds implications for various Kamehameha Schools programs, including campus programs, Department of Education (DOE) collaborations, charter schools, and postsecondary financial aid support. First, Kamehameha Schools must consider its long-term view of success for its students, which sets attainment of at least a four-year degree to be success in educational engagement. This discussion strongly suggests that there is value in tracking and reporting other outcomes, including completion rates of two-year degrees, trade certificates, and military training.

Kamehameha Schools has started on this pathway for student career preparation with the establishment of career academies on its Maui and Kea'au campuses. Evaluations of these programs will shed light on the extent to which they are meeting intended outcomes and whether a career academy would be of potential value to Kapālama students.

In addition, Kamehameha Schools can promote the Multiple Pathways approach beyond our campuses through collaborations with the DOE by supporting programs and services that link learning to career trajectories. This support may take various forms, such as helping schools take advantage of early start programs or promoting project-based, hands-on apprenticeship initiatives, and career academies that address the criteria shared by Grubb and Oakes.

However, these efforts need not stop at high school. In addition to its existing postsecondary financial aid, Kamehameha Schools currently provides financial support for training programs via Hana Lima.² Expanding such programs, including well-structured apprenticeships and internships could be a valuable addition to the opportunities Kamehameha Schools supports for postsecondary learners.

In adopting programs that create Multiple Pathways on our own campuses or supporting similar programs through collaborations, Kamehameha Schools must ensure high quality education is provided to all learners, including 21st Century Skills.³ Without these conditions, students are at risk of being subjected to discriminatory institutionalization of low expectations and sub-par preparation that was the hallmark of tracking. At the same time, the quality of education Kamehameha Schools provides should be measured, in part, by how well it prepares learners to navigate shifting labor and workforce demands later in life.

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² For more information about the Hana Lima program see Keahiolalo-Karasuda and Awa (2011).

³ For more information on 21st Century Skills see Ledward and Hirata (2011).