Kamehameha Schools forms partnership with Microsoft

Kamehameha Schools has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with technology partner Microsoft. By strategically applying technology within the school environment, students are provided with more opportunities to succeed.

The goal of the partnership is to better prepare students for the highly competitive work environment by introducing person-centered and relevant learning experiences. By incorporating next-generation teaching models and efficient, effective technology infrastructures from Microsoft, KS haumāna are empowered to uplift their communities.

“Establishing this partnership creates potential career pathways in the computer science and technology fields,” said KS Executive Vice President of Administration Darrel Hoke. “We teach students how to use the foundational elements, but they take this approach to learning to the next level by incorporating critical thinking, strategy and innovation, such as approaching issues through game theory. They learn in real time by searching online for answers and collaborating with their peers – it’s those efforts that will contribute to making the world a better place.”

One aspect of the Microsoft MOU already in place involves the integration of the popular game Minecraft. Seventh-grade haumāna at KS Kapalāmā Middle School are using the game to identify issues affecting the Native Hawaiian community, while also experimenting with structural and socio-economic alterations that can improve communities.

The MOU also includes access to the Microsoft Imagine Academy Program, which helps students achieve industry-recognized skills and certifications on the latest technologies. The academy provides resources that benefit students, faculty and staff, and aims to bolster the skills of college- and career-bound students so that they can become better communicators, critical thinkers, innovators and problem solvers.

The partnership will also help Microsoft incorporate ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i (Hawaiian language) through its Artificial Intelligence program, which will create a more seamless integration of the Native Hawaiian language across multiple digital platforms.

New mobile outreach center brings KS services to rural Kaua‘i communities

In September 2018, Kamehameha Schools rolled out a new Mobile Outreach Center on Kaua‘i to help more ‘ohana apply for educational programs, financial aid opportunities and complete the Native Hawaiian ancestry verification. KS invested nearly $40,000 in the mobile unit.

“We are a small island, the distance to our office in Līhu‘e is a barrier for some families,” said Coty “Buffy” Ofisa, KS Regional Director for Kaua‘i and Ni‘ihau. “This mobile unit gives us an opportunity to meet the ‘ohana we serve in their communities and bring resources to them for one-on-one assistance.”

In September of 2017, KS broadened its reach throughout the Kaua‘i and Ni‘ihau communities by opening a Community Hale in Līhu‘e. Located at 201 Ahaki Street (next to Tip-Top Restaurant), the Community Hale includes offices for KS’ four-person regional team, as well as ‘ohana engagement team members and counselors – two of whom are dedicated to the nationally acclaimed Kamehameha Scholars program and one focused on post-high school efforts.

“The most important thing about the work we do on Kaua‘i is connecting with our hardest-to-reach families – going mobile and being purposeful about honoring and knowing that some of our families won’t be able to come to Līhu‘e and find us,” Ofisa said. “Going to them and making them a part of our family not only helps those people at that time, but it will help every generation after that.”

Although preliminary results like this may be able to show a program’s impact on an individual’s health, contributing to increased individual well-being and a societal benefit through the reduction of health care costs.

Maunakea, of the John A. Burns School of Medicine Department of Native Hawaiian Health, talks about the connection between ‘āina and ola (life) as a concept rooted in Hawaiian knowledge. “Our kūpuna have long taught us the concepts of mālama ‘āina, where our environment in turn directly affects the health of us all. We are grateful to continue learning from their ‘ike.”

The interaction between health outcomes, lifestyle behaviors, and social networks (for example, friends and family), may be able to show a program’s impact on an individual’s health, contributing to increased individual well-being and a societal benefit through the reduction of health care costs.

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