KEEP
Kamehameha Early Education Program

HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

The Kamehameha School's Early Education Program (KEEP) had its inception in an institution uniquely suited to nurture its growth. First, its funds are private, not dependent upon government appropriation for initiation or continuation. These have supported long-term studies. Second, its trustees have maintained strong interest in the work, even through the early, exploratory phases of the research. Third, the institution's purposes are entirely congruent with the needs to be met by research: Namely, assisting pure and part-Hawaiians in their efforts to become effective participants in contemporary society. There hardly could be a better fit between this and a program designed to assist students in their efforts to learn to read. Fourth, a spirit of cooperation between the State Department of Education (DOE) and The Kamehameha Schools exists, and this is essential to KEEP's success. Clearly the time and place have been right for the program.

All of this was less clear when KEEP began—first as an idea (in the early 1960s) and later as an experimental project (the early 1970s). Then The Kamehameha Schools was a campus with three units: a Preparatory Department, kindergarten through the eighth grade; a School for Boys and a School for Girls for grades nine through 12. For the most part, the curriculum was standard, based on quality school programs of the time, carrying on traditions developed over the seven decades of the institution's existence.

The institution itself was well established, having a history which reached back to Hawaiian antiquity. It was founded in 1887, a legacy to her people by a Hawaiian princess, Bernice Pauahi Bishop.

The Princess' inheritance included about one-tenth of Hawaii's total land area. In her will it is clear that she wanted these lands to benefit Hawaii's children. She instructed the trustees of her estate "to erect and maintain in the Hawaiian Islands two schools . . . one for boys and one for girls, to be known as . . . The Kamehameha Schools."

From modest beginnings the legacy had grown. By 1962, enrolled day and boarding students numbered 2,100. Still, admission was competitive, with eight applicants for every available space. Many more wanted to be served than could be accommodated. So special selection procedures were used. Applicants who ranked higher in academic promise and social adjustment were taken over those ranked lower.

Success was intended to breed success.

But what of ethnic Hawaiian students who tried but could not gain entrance to the campus program, or who did not even try; those who remained in the schools; those for whom failure bred failure? What was being done for these individuals? Ronald Gallimore and I, a social scientist and a school administrator, speculated on this in a campus parking lot late one evening after a meeting. Might a program be devised that would allow such children to achieve at parity with other ethnic groups? From that discussion KEEP was conceived.

There was, nevertheless, a long gestation period. During the 1963-64 school year, the first concrete proposal came. It suggested that The Kamehameha Schools, the Queen Liliuokalani Children's Center, the State Department of Education (DOE), the State Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and the Ford Foundation cooperate in establishing an early education experimental project. However, in 1965 federally-sponsored early education programs such as HeadStart began, and the Ford Foundation changed policies—declining to fund large programs simultaneous with HeadStart.

Renewed life came in May of 1969 when a consulting team of S.M. Brownell, Thomas James, Carl Marburger and Bruce McClellan reviewed the programs of The Kamehameha Schools and recommended to the trustees that The Schools initiate an early childhood education project for youngsters not regularly-enrolled at The Schools. The trustees then authorized The Schools to employ both Ronald Gallimore and Roland Tharp to conduct a feasibility study regarding this proposal. This study was carried out during the period September through December, 1969, and was sponsored by the Bishop Museum Community Research Institute, whose work included the conducting of anthropological and psychological studies of modern Hawaiian people.
The Gallimore-Tharp report was received by The Schools on January 15, 1970. It suggested that since the great majority of Hawaiian children are educated in the state's public schools, The Kamehameha Schools could best serve the educational needs of these children by working cooperatively with the DOE. Specifically, The Schools should undertake to provide a continuing and permanent information and consultation service to the public schools with the aim of maximum improvement in the educational achievement of Hawaiian youth.

A five-year experimental project was recommended. It was to include three basic components: compiling and collating existing information about effective ways of educating Hawaiians/part Hawaiians; establishing a demonstration school for the development of new materials and methods of instruction; and, disseminating what had been learned into the educational establishment through a consultation program designed to "reach out" to schools serving Hawaiian children.

This recommendation was favorably received by the trustees of The Schools on February 5, 1970. They agreed to approve in principle the establishment of the project.

Discussions were also held with representatives of the Office of the Governor of the State of Hawaii and the DOE. A bill supporting the project was introduced into the State legislature. It called for State participation on a matching basis with The Kamehameha Schools through the Progressive Neighborhoods Act (299). The total amount required for the five-year project was $1.2 million. Although a companion bill in the Senate passed, the House bill (HB 1745) was not approved by the House Finance Committee, and The School's hopes to implement the proposal were again unrealized.

In the summer of 1970, a new and positive sign came. The Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation, the Freer Eleemosynary Trust, and the Juliette M. Atherton Trust took interest in the idea and provided grants for its further development. More impetus came that fall when the annual review of the work of both The Schools and the Estate by a court-appointed auditor urged that the project be undertaken. Finally, in December of 1970, the Board of Trustees agreed to underwrite the work. After nearly a decade of plans and proposals, the Kamehameha Early Education Project—KEEP—was born.

It was a momentous decision for The Schools. For the first time in its eighty-four-year history, educational research and development was to become a regular part of its operations. We had high hopes but no certainty that the work would bring success. Six years were to pass and 36 major research hypotheses were to be raised and tested before positive results would come. This is the story the researchers themselves will tell on the following pages.

During the decade of the Seventies, more than 24 programs were initiated to extend the services of The Schools through the islands. These range from pre-natal to adult education and include programs for gifted to alienated individuals. About 42,000 are currently receiving educational benefits from The Schools. One of the major components of this growing number of activities is KEEP.

We welcome this opportunity to share with you our approach to an enormously challenging problem: getting children to read up to their potential. And, as you will see, the findings of research are being applied—we are in classrooms in the field. Yet, the work is ongoing, not completed. The legacy of Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop continues, evolving and expanding to meet the changing educational needs of Hawaii's youth and thereby contributing to the well-being of the larger community of which we are all a part.

Jack Darvill
President
The Kamehameha Schools