

TRANSFORMING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION LEAD TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM LEARNING COMMUNITY

YEAR 2 SESSION 1 NEWSLETTER

What's Inside?



General Overview

A high-level summary of content discussed during the learning sessions, as well as connections made among participants



Session Highlights

Challenges, strategies and questions to consider that were shared during small group discussions



Office Hours

Additional ideas and support for individual teams offered by our guest lecturer, specifically related to project goals with a focus on equity





GENERAL OVERVIEW

During the first session of the Year 2 Learning Community, we focused our attention on strategies for building coalition and collaboration around early childhood change efforts. This session included a live Q&A from our featured guest expert, and scaffolded conversation considering the current challenges and opportunities grantees experience around collaboration.

LEARNING GOAL

Strategies for building coalition and collaboration around early childhood change efforts



SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Q&A

For session 1, we welcomed **PaKou Her**, Principal of Tseng Development Group, who provides lectures, skills workshops, organizational development, transformative leadership coaching, and grassroots strategy development designed to build racial justice and create systems change. PaKou has nearly 30 years of anti-racism organizing experience, a decade of which was as Director of the national racial justice training program at Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training. She also spent three years at 18MillionRising.org (18MR) as Campaign Director and Executive Director. At 18MR, she leveraged civic technology and new media to build power and community among Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. PaKou also has digital campaign experience as a Field Organizer with MoveOn.org and as Senior Campaign Director of Reproductive Rights and Culture at UltraViolet. She is currently the Director of Influencer Engagement at ParentsTogether, where she works to shape policies and culture that help all families thrive. Born and raised in the Midwest, PaKou takes great pride in representing AAPIs living in the nation's midsection and believes there are invaluable stories to be told by People of Color living in the most rural areas of the United States. She lives in Kansas City, MO, with her spouse and two children.

In her recorded webinar, PaKou shared the purpose and function of coalitions, how power shows up, and what accountability means in these spaces. During this live question-and-answer session, participants asked questions about power and how to leverage their power and proximity to make change.

What is the how of accountability and power?

Talking about power requires discipline and modeling. First, we have to identify power, then we can practice skills in a hands-on way. This requires individuals to be vulnerable and transparent about where they are in terms of race, gender, access to education, etc. Building skill takes time, as does building the critical mass needed to name power transparently.

“This is a growing stream of both experience and skill and practice. This is praxis at its best. On an individual level, a group level, and an institutional level. Because once you have a group of people who have willfully developed the skill to talk about power without shame, we may recognize that we need to redistribute power, even though we didn’t systemically create it. If I say I want to be a part of a transformational or collaborative body and I am not willing to do the work it will show, that includes talking about power.”

- PaKou Her

How do power and privilege go together, and how can we address privilege in a way that is open? This feels invisible for many people.

Meaningful conversations about privilege start with relationships. You cannot agitate someone around their identity if they have never considered their identities as something that has given them access to something. We start by understanding the racial and power dynamics of the groups and institutional relationships with each person. By building personal relationships, we then have a greater ability to open a dialogue about privilege.



When thinking about having a conversation about power and privilege, you should consider:

- What does this person need to have this conversation?
- Am I the right person to engage in a conversation with this person?

“In societies where systems are oppressive, power and privilege and bias and control tend to be the things we invisibilize. So it becomes hard to see them, and if you identify them, you can talk about them. When I want to talk about this with them, is it about shaming them? We know shame isn’t a good motivator.”

- PaKou Her

What does authentic accountability to each other look like?

Authentic accountability is having power and belonging in a space. Oftentimes, we will practice accountability to say that we have representation at the table, including those with the most marginalized identities, but haven't genuinely given authority and decision-making power to those individuals.

Authentic accountability asks the following questions:

- How will power be distributed?
- How will decisions be made and transparent?
- How will we ensure full engagement and that people are engaged in a group process?
- How will we choose relationship and power re-sharing over efficiency?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

During each learning community session, participants are offered the opportunity to make direct connections to the challenges and successes experienced in their work related to this grant. Participants use a protocol to consider the session topic objectively, reflectively, and with an action-oriented lens. From these conversations, participants uplifted connections and challenges, opportunities for change, and questions to consider.

Connections and Challenges

- Four-year institutions of higher education, land grant institutions, etc., have a long history of resources and wealth of all kinds, and we strive to share power and resources, and ultimately change systems. There is a disparity in resources and power inside the institutions of higher education. It is important for the field to consider how to share the power and resource across institutions of higher education with the goal of long-term systems change how it was discussed today.
- Small institutions usually don't have the time or resources to advocate for systems change, and faculty at community and tribal colleges are working to meet the needs of students in a position of reactivity. It takes resources and time to engage in proactive planning, growth, and development to be proactive.
- There are experiences where assumptions are being made that need to be talked about. Naming power, privilege, and building on authentic accountability to each other is critical, specifically around compensation.



“I represent a state agency and fit into the ‘institutional role’. This content helped me see that I need to take soft supportive approach to my interactions. This has helped me to see where I fit.”

- Participant

Opportunities for change

- We sometimes get stuck looking at things from the perspective of our own institutions' constraints (e.g., budget, declining enrollments, etc.), but we can accomplish a lot more when we build coalitions.
- Change is needed in the whole education system, from birth through college. The banking system of teaching does not leave room for critical thinking. If teachers (K–12) had a stronger basis in early childhood education (ECE), children could better transition from early childhood into elementary education.
- Stakeholders should be included in coalition work more equitably. For example, compensating family members, students, and early childhood professionals when they serve on committees and similar roles.
- Everyone has positions of power and privilege in one way or another. Higher education leaders often have the opportunity to model and ensure the voices of those farthest from power are included in the conversation.



Questions to consider

- How do we address systemic problems in our institutions? How do we get people with the most power and influence to support our ECE students?
- How do we leverage the work we're doing with this grant to impact our institutions?
- Students of color and women experience gatekeeping within higher education—how can we make the system work for everybody?
- How do we sustain this important systems change work without ongoing funding? How can we do this work collectively across IHEs for maximum impact?
- How can we increase the respect for and importance of early care and education in the field of higher education?



OFFICE HOURS

The team from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa participated in a rich dialogue with PaKou Her. The conversation focused on utilizing a broad range of stakeholders, their recently released compensation study, and a new legislative session to advance their efforts.



PAKOU HER
Principal of Tseng
Development
Group

Key Considerations

Tips for coalition planning with a broad range of stakeholders in mind. The following considerations were offered by PaKou to those who participated in office hours.

First, consider who the coalition needs to be at the table to achieve its goals.

“I would really strongly encourage the coalition to really do a self-interest and asset map of who are the people you want at the table. So that tends to be like, if we want to win, who has the power to help us win? And who are all the people with the power? How do we contact them? Are they on board? If they’re already on board, then how do we bring them in and leverage their role and their power? If they’re not on board yet, how do we need to organize them and move them to be with us? Small institutions usually don’t have the time or resources to advocate for systems change, and faculty at community and tribal colleges are working to meet the needs of students in a position of reactivity. It takes resources and time to engage in proactive planning, growth, and development to be proactive.”



Then include those people as early as possible in the planning process. This creates buy-in and an opportunity to share in the decision-making of the strategic initiatives and next steps.

“The people who have power, institutional power, and authority are usually the ones who set the table and then decide who comes to the table. And oftentimes, those tend to be partners, coalition members from organizations or constituencies that tend to be institutionally marginalized, systemically marginalized. And so when they come, everything’s already been decided, and they’re just coming to sort of plug in.”

Once they are there, make sure that everyone understands the outcome. When you bring a diverse group of people together, their views might be the only ones they bring. So, there will be a need to help the group see multiple vantage points and why the strategies work toward a defined outcome.

“Particularly, I find when it comes to legislation and policy, why are we choosing to tell stories this way? Now, we could tell stories five million ways, but this is how we’re going to do it, and this is our approach, and we think this is most powerful. This is where I feel like if you have narrative testing or message testing or any data that shows any testing on results, you can gather that data and say, listen, this is what we’re seeing, so this is why we’re going to go with this framework, this narrative framework over this narrative framework or whatever it is.”

And throughout, ensure you have a real commitment to be in relationship with others and be ready to cultivate good relationships—individual to individual.

“So that means that in your meetings, you cultivate time for human connection. You cultivate time to check in with each other. You cultivate the time to get to know one another personally and get to know why people said yes. Those are the kinds of high-touch relationships that are beyond invaluable currency when it comes to the lean times in coalitions, or when folks are feeling exhausted. A committed relationship is actually, ultimately, I find the glue.”