

Systems Change

“effective solutions are homegrown and owned”

PREL views systems change as an opportunity to work with schools, communities, districts, and states to enact change by moving beyond thinking about individuals and individual organizations, single problems and single solutions. It entails thinking about systems—policy systems, education systems, social service systems, information systems, and technology systems. In doing so, PREL and key stakeholders work closely to look at their educational systems at multiple levels: state, district, school, and classroom. They tell us the reality of their state of education, and, with their guidance, we develop solutions through the lens of local contexts, values, and priorities and adapt identified opportunities to match local needs. Through this process, we draw on what we know works from the best evidence available and collectively find solutions to educational change and improvement with the belief that effective solutions are homegrown and owned. Finally, in partnership with educators, we conduct research to identify solutions to critical and enduring educational issues, and we evaluate systems change efforts in educational transformation. Following are examples of our programs that support the area of Systems Change.

Pacific Comprehensive Center (PCC)

The first goal of the PCC is to assist the Pacific state education agencies (SEAs) in understanding the purposes and provisions of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) and in accessing information on research-based best practices that will help them attain their school improvement and student achievement goals. In light of the region's isolation and emerging technology infrastructure, PREL has established two intermediate objectives for this goal: (1) to strengthen working relationships among and between the SEAs, the U.S. ED, and resource providers; and (2) to increase the SEAs' access to research-based best practices and methods.

The second goal of the PCC is to provide technical assistance to the SEAs that will enable them to meet NCLB and similar U.S. federal requirements in six SEA-identified priority need areas. These areas, which constitute the intermediate objectives of the PCC's second goal, are: (1) standards, (2) assessment, (3) accountability, (4) teacher quality, (5) ELL services, and (6) services to students with disabilities.

PREL has assisted a number of Pacific entities with a self-assessment of their systems of support, the first step in a multi-step process. Participating enti-

ties include the FSM National DOE, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Chuuk, and the RMI. The Statewide Systems of Support (SSOS) project promotes discussions around gaps and challenges identified during the review and assists policy makers and SEA practitioners in developing plans to close gaps in their support systems. As well, the PCC partnership with the Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) has been conducting school leadership institutes for principals in the RMI and in Pohnpei focusing on the skills needed to lead the school improvement plan (SIP) development process. During summer 2009, 80 school principals and head teachers from the RMI and, in December 2009, 48 principals and education specialists attended the principals' institutes. One of the goals of the principals' institutes is to promote SIPs as school accountability tools; while some schools do have SIPs, the plans, for the most part, are static documents and ones developed in isolation of school communities. Developing the recognition that an SIP should be a living data-based document that promotes and strengthens the partnership between school staff and parents is a process that is well underway, but will take some time to become rooted.

Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific (REL-P)

In conjunction with PREL's PCC, PREL's REL-P program complements and supplements the PCC's work at the state agency level by working at the school and classroom levels. We do this through interrelated activities of continuous needs sensing, targeted research reports on emergent issues, in-depth studies of new initiatives, bridging research and practice, and strategic dissemination of research and practice. The REL-P draws on its own work, as well as the portfolio of research-based products across the entire REL system.

In 2009, the REL-P developed and disseminated the following six peer-reviewed research studies: (1) *Preparing and Licensing High-Quality Teachers in Pacific Region Jurisdictions*, (2) *A Status Report on Middle School Mathematics Assessment and Student Achieve-*

ment in the Pacific Region, (3) *English Language Proficiency Assessment in the Pacific Region*, (4) *The Status of Large-Scale Assessment in the Pacific Region*, (5) *The Status of the Preparation and Hiring of School Principals in the U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Region*, and (6) *Achievement Gap Patterns of Grade 8 American Indian and Alaska Native Students in Reading and Mathematics* (with REL Northwest and seven other RELs).

These reports can be downloaded at the national REL website, <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/>. Links to the national site are also found on PREL's own website, www.prel.org.

Through partnership between key PREL programs, such as the PCC and the T&FASEGP, and key organizations, such as the Western Regional Resource Center (WRRRC) and the University of Guam's Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, & Services (CEDDERS), we have held six events that brought practitioners and researchers together with the purpose of moving the best research into practice. The subjects of these events were: *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools* with Dr. Sam Redding; *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices* with Dr. Michael Kamil; *Dropout Prevention Strategies* with Dr. Russ Rumberger; *Assisting Students Struggling With Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades* with Dr. David Tilly; *Assisting Students Struggling with Mathematics: Response to Intervention (RtI) for Elementary and Middle Schools* with Dr. Russell Gersten; and *Structuring Out-of-School Time To Improve Academic Achievement* with Dr. Megan Beckett. Over 450 educators across the Pacific service region participated in these events.

One major undertaking of the REL-P is the rigorous study of a 2-year professional development program, Pacific Communities with High-performance In Literacy Development (Pacific CHILD). This study being conducted in American Samoa, the CNMI, and Hawai'i comprises more than 50 schools and approximately 200 4th and 5th grade teachers who participate in a sustained professional development program that is more than 200 hours a year and focuses on three reading components (question generation, vocabulary, and text structure) and three instructional components



(differentiated instruction, interactive tasks, and cognitively-rich environments) with a special emphasis on informational text. The Pacific CHILD professional development program is designed to provide ongoing support to improve teacher knowledge and practice, through activities such as annual summer institutes, mini-institutes, lesson demonstrations, classroom observations (including a preconference and post-conference), and Structured Learning Team (SLT) meetings.

With access to the REL national system and drawing on our growing portfolio of research-based products, in 2009 we have used multiple strategies to disseminate the best of research to schools and classrooms to promote systems change. Over 30 thousand copies of the semiannual *Pacific Educator* magazine were distributed by mail, and is also made available in digital format on PREL's website, www.prel.org. PREL's website also provides links to national resources, such as those made available through the IES website and the U.S. ED Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network.



Pacific Assessment Systems and Services (PASS) Program

PREL's PASS program supports accountability systems by assisting with the development of standards-based assessments (SBAs) aligned with local content standards. The SBAs measure and report at the benchmark or indicator level. The detailed reporting provides parents with information about what their children learned and did not learn. Teachers can use this information to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching strategies. Administrators can evaluate teacher and school effectiveness and plan professional development targeted at specific learning targets. American Samoa now has 24 SBAs and is testing all the NCLB grades and subjects. The CNMI is adding SBAs in reading, math, and science so that all students, grades 3–6, are tested. The CNMI is changing all secondary tests to end-of-course tests. For example, the grade 10 math test has been replaced by pre-algebra, algebra, algebra 1, and geometry tests. Twenty-five new achievement tests were created for the Palau Ministry of Education. Pohnpei State is using 10 SBAs, five in reading and five in social studies, and their elementary reading tests are a blend of the Pohnpeian language and English. The FSM National Government added five new math SBAs to their three reading SBAs. The RMI now has SBAs in reading, math, and science, and they have parallel reading tests in Marshallese and English.

PREL has developed software, *Soe_Assessment*, to accompany the assessments. The software assists states, districts, and schools in scoring the SBAs and creates school-level charts, individual student data, and a complete test analysis. This service provides leaders at a variety of levels with the information necessary for informed decision making. American Samoa, the CNMI, Pohnpei, and the RMI are currently using *Soe_Assessment* to produce detailed large-scale assessment data.

Pacific Education Data Management System (PEDMS)

PREL also developed PEDMS, a data gathering system for SEAs in the Pacific, and provided trainings to administrators, data managers, and data entry personnel on its use. PEDMS can generate reports at both the central office and school levels. These reports enable the central office and schools to: (a) generate aggregate tables for reports to be submitted to various audiences, such as boards of education, state legislature, key stake holders, funding agencies, and the general public; (b) make better-informed decisions; and (c) use them as a tool for planning. PEDMS is currently used in the CNMI, the FSM (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), the RMI, and the Republic of Palau.

Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs)

Under the PIRC grant, PREL is continuing to work with the FSM PIRC and the RMI PIRC to strengthen the relationship between parents and their children's school and further the developmental progress of children. PREL often plays a liaison role between the Pacific communities, schools, and the Washington policymakers. PREL's PIRCs take pride in their efforts to localize effective parental involvement, strengthening relationships and building partnerships between parents and schools to better meet the educational needs of children. Each center draws on the local language and culture to translate global best practices to fit the local context.

The Cluster Model for School Reform, created by the RMI PIRC, is being adopted in both the FSM and RMI. Under this model, the successful learning achievement of all young people and management of schools are the responsibilities of the whole community. As a result of implementing this model, both the FSM and the RMI are reporting greater involvement by parents and community members and greater coordination among teaching staff.

Thirty-three schools in the RMI are using it to organize and mobilize all education stakeholders in their communities to step up and be involved in the planning processes to improve their schools, beginning with what is on hand and then bringing in other resources (e.g., the MOE, PREL, local government, national government) to expand, extend, or improve on these local initiatives. Women United Together

Marshall Islands (WUTMI), a local women's non-government organization, is the executor of the RMI PIRC Early Childhood Education component in which 8 trained and certified Parents as Teachers (PATs) educators are currently serving 80 families conducting early childhood parent education family home visitations on Majuro and other islands in the RMI.

Forty-six schools in the FSM (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap) are using the Cluster Model PTA to organize and mobilize the education stakeholders in communities involved in parental activities that support their children in advancing academically. Approximately 12,000 parents and over 9,500 students are receiving services under the FSM PIRC.

