

C ONDUCTING RIGOROUS RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

2010 was an exciting year for rigorous research and evaluation at PREL. Our Research Division advanced and disseminated research on effective teaching and leadership, standards-based assessment, second language acquisition, youth resiliency, and culturally responsive pedagogy and assessment, among other critical needs areas. Additionally, our External Evaluations Division successfully completed multiple program evaluations for a range of government and nonprofit education agencies.

In response to requests from our service region, PREL continued to expand its portfolio of research projects designed to advance science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. In 2010, PREL researchers and partnering agencies were awarded National Science Foundation funding to develop and implement a Pacific Island Climate Education Partnership to advance climate literacy in the U.S.-affiliated Pacific Islands (USAPI). Most recently, PREL began work on a National Science Foundation Discovery Research K-12 (DRK-12) award to study math test performance by American Indian and Alaskan Native students.

PREL's research agenda is accentuated by the work of Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific and funded by the Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. During the 2010 fiscal year, an independent research team from Berkeley Policy Associates (BPA) conducted a rigorous study of the impacts of our Pacific Communities with High-performance In Literacy Development (Pacific CHILD) program in three entities of the Pacific region: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Hawai'i. The study tested the effectiveness of the professional development program



in public elementary schools by assessing whether the program had an impact on teacher outcomes (knowledge and practice) and student achievement in reading. In addition to the Pacific CHILD work, PREL continued to respond to regional needs by connecting practitioners to

research through applied research and development projects, studies, and other technical assistance activities. Such projects included work on nutrition and physical education policy and practice in secondary schools in the Pacific region, a longitudinal study on Native Hawaiian

student achievement, and a case study on the Pacific CHILD professional development program. In addition to its applied research projects, REL Pacific also convened a number of high-profile public forums throughout the Pacific region, bringing together policymakers, parents, community members, and school leaders to expand their knowledge of evidence-based strategies in key areas of interest: turning around chronically low-performing schools, data-driven decision making, effective literacy instruction for English language learners, dropout prevention, and increasing parental involvement.

PREL's External Evaluation Division continued to employ a variety of quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide rigorous formative and summative evaluations to clients throughout the Pacific. Beyond evaluating the effectiveness of programs, we also helped clients better understand the work they do and coherently presented the goals and outcomes of their work to third parties. Our clients use a variety of methods—from video games to sustainable farming—to educate children and adults. In 2010, PREL program staff completed evaluations for schools, organizations, and foundations such as the Hawai'i Department of Education, Kamehameha Schools, and the University of Hawai'i.

As PREL begins the 2011 fiscal year, we are excited to welcome new researchers to our team, engage in new and fulfilling partnerships, and continue to work collaboratively in advancing education research and responding to regional needs.

Pacific Communities with High-Performance In Literacy Development (Pacific CHILD)

Pacific Communities with High-performance In Literacy Development, a randomized controlled trial of a professional development program, may already be improving the skills and techniques of teachers in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Hawai'i.



Althea Kalei Arinaga, a teacher participating in the treatment group of the trial, was recently named Teacher of the Year for the island of Kaua'i. Ms. Arinaga is an incredibly amazing 4th grade teacher at Kapa'a Elementary. It was remarkable to see how she gently infused native Hawaiian practices and academic literacy in teaching her 4th grade students. One example that stands out was a unit on invasive plants. She did a compare and contrast lesson on indigenous plants and invasive plants, and

later took her students on an overnight trip to Koke'e State Park to clear invasive plants from the hiking trails. Her class was the group of volunteers who cleared the largest number of invasive plants in one period—over 10,000 stocks!

As a concluding activity, Ms. Arinaga's students wrote letters to Mayor Carvalho. It was astonishing to observe how one teacher embraced and implemented all of the Pacific CHILD components—vocabulary, text structure, question generation, interactive tasks, differentiated instruction, and cognitively rich environments—seamlessly.

Like Ms. Arinaga, many teachers have shared that participating in the Pacific CHILD program has been one of their best professional development experiences. They felt that the ongoing and sustained professional development provided them with much-needed support and helped them learn new strategies, especially localized in their classroom setting with their own students.

