

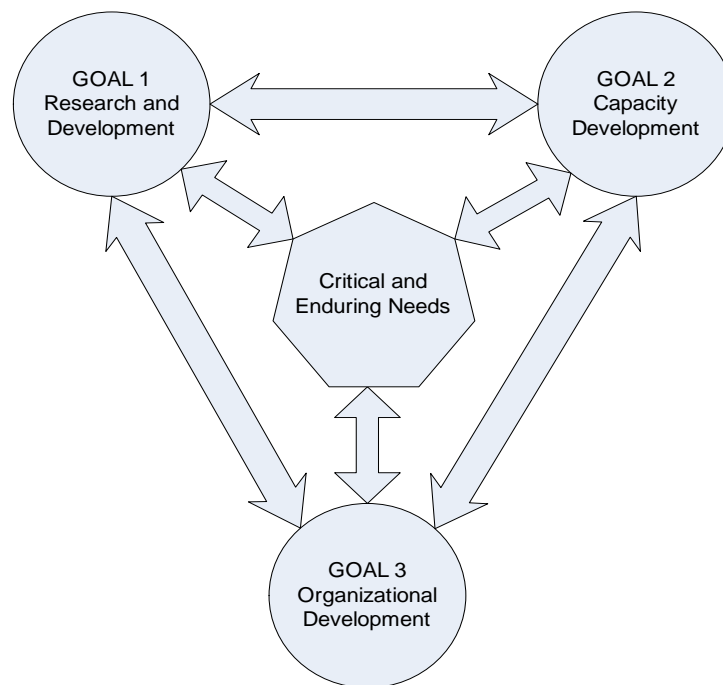
PREL STRATEGIC PLAN 2006–2010

Preamble

Pacific Resources for Education and Learning's (PREL's) strategic plan is driven by and responds to the educational needs of the Pacific region. The three strategic goals: research and development (R&D), capacity development, and organizational development, and their attendant objectives specifically address how PREL organizes its portfolio and moves it out into the Pacific region to address critical and enduring educational needs. Our three strategic goals are organized by a conceptual framework that links the three goals, and are undergirded by a philosophical approach, theories of change, and a theory of action (procedural knowledge) that explain how we work with educators across the diverse Pacific region.

As shown in Figure 1, PREL uses a conceptual framework to link our three strategic goals.

Figure 1. Strategic Plan Goals Conceptual Framework



In addressing the needs of the region, we typically begin by turning first to research. PREL's R&D function serves as the motor that drives our capacity development in the field and how we strategically organize ourselves to have important and meaningful outcomes and impact in the region. Our R&D work includes, but is not limited to, the conduct of primary applied research in the region; syntheses of extant research; and selection of appropriate research-based strategies, tools, and processes. Through our R&D function, we contribute to the knowledge base and strategically and purposively draw up on it. What we learn and glean

from our research efforts is the base for systematically and continuously reviewing, building, and adjusting our portfolio. It is this portfolio and its research base that we use for capacity development in the region.

PREL strategically draws on its research to move high-quality products and services to the field to build awareness, new knowledge, and skills, and to change educational practices and policies. Our R&D helps us to identify effective solutions to educational issues in the region and effective ways for PREL to work with a diverse population of educators, decision makers, and stakeholders. We look to research to guide our work; to provide evidence-based strategies, processes, and tools to address needs; and to identify how we can best move research into the field. To do this, we build strategic partnerships; assist in the development of support infrastructures and systems; build capacity; and help with policy and systems formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

To effectively contribute to and draw upon the educational knowledge base, to move research into the hands of educators and key stakeholders, and to use research-based strategies, tools, and processes to build capacity across the region, PREL strategically organizes and structures its resources, capacities, and core competencies through a system of continuously monitoring and evaluating our work and how we are organized and structured. To monitor and evaluate the organization of our work, we review and assess our organizational structure, conduct periodic self-assessments through portfolio reviews, audit and assess our financial resources and proposed development opportunities, evaluate our core competencies and capacities, and assess how effectively we communicate and inform the field. These processes help us as a learning organization to continuously improve, readjust, recalibrate, and further develop our ability to more effectively undertake our core functions of R&D and capacity development and have a larger impact on education across the Pacific region.

Our strategic plan and its goals and objectives also have a philosophical base that draws on what we understand to be the core values of and assumptions about formal education and development and the vision for education among the people of the Pacific region, while taking into account the local requirements of individual states and countries and, for some, federal mandates, such as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) legislation for territories and the U.S. Department of the Interior mandates for the Freely Associated States. It is our responsibility to incorporate and balance Pacific values and assumptions about education and the vision for Pacific children with other policies and regulations emanating from individual jurisdictions and other external compacts and legislative requirements. We do this by working with educators and key stakeholders in the Pacific region to build ownership of the formal education process and developing a clearly articulated vision to inform educational development for Pacific people. We also imbed in these processes through appropriate adaptations any policies and mandates required by jurisdictions and other external entities such as the U.S. federal government.

When we work with local educators and stakeholders we address with them the following issues:

- The core values that should be taught in Pacific education
- What counts as education in the Pacific

- Legitimization and measurement of educational outcomes
- The use of core values and educational outcomes for development priorities
- What is needed for systems change to occur

(Source: Heine, H. [2005]. *Rethinking Pacific education: Values, knowledge, and skills to live inside and beyond the reef*. Honolulu, HI: Pacific Resources for Education and Learning)

As we use a Pacific orientation as our starting point, we also include other perspectives about education and educational research-based models, processes, tools, and strategies from other nations to identify what is applicable and potentially adaptable to Pacific contexts, and to facilitate a process for Pacific educators to evaluate the possibilities and make good educational choices for Pacific children. The difficulty lies in balancing the need for Pacific people to be globally competitive and to ensure that Pacific children know and understand their roots.

Our strategic goals are also supported by theories of change and action. The former are important to our understanding of how we believe students learn; how teachers learn and change practices; how schools turn around, improve, and develop; and how systems change. Theories of change guide how we build capacity in the region, and how we understand in our research what works, how, and why. Theories of action support how we work most effectively with educators and stakeholders, constructively building on their prior knowledge and norms of experience, honoring and incorporating Pacific values and visions for children in educational reform, and strategically using research processes that “fit” with local practices that are timely and properly sufficient to be locally realistic and feasible.

It is important to understand PREL’s strategic plan in the broader context of how it will be operationalized and carried out. This is impacted by our philosophy of what is education and educational change and development in the Pacific and our theories of change and action. These core beliefs and working theories are important to how we carry out PREL’s program of R&D; how we build capacity; and how we organize and structure our organization, select and develop core competencies and capacities to carry out the work, and strategically develop and allocate our financial resources.

Definitions of PREL’s Three Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Research and Development (R&D)

Educational R&D is the process of producing, disseminating, and applying scientifically-based knowledge on which educational practitioners and policy makers can draw and use to improve education. This definition goes beyond just the technical quality of research to include the production of high-quality research that contributes to the extant educational research knowledge base. It involves basic and applied research, research syntheses, interpretation, and dissemination of research in a complex, non-linear fashion with feedback loops from practitioners and policy makers to researchers. As such, educational R&D is designed to generate an innovative learning environment for the whole educational system. It includes

seeking solutions to practical education questions and developing, testing, and advancing theory.

The knowledge available to practitioners and decision makers at various levels in the education system derives not solely from scientific research. Insight grounded in the knowledge, contexts, and experiences of educational practitioners and policy makers plays a significant role in decision making about what is educational knowledge and what is important in educational improvement and development. In addition, what we learn from monitoring and evaluating programs and analyses of educational statistics and indicators constitutes important elements of the educational knowledge base.

The value of an educational R&D program is what it brings to further the educational research knowledge base and how practitioners and decision makers can access and use the research to improve education. For PREL, the key dimensions of its R&D program are imbedded in the question, *Who needs what knowledge, for whom, and for what purpose?* This question implies that PREL's educational R&D is needs- and consumer-driven, not a matter of production and consumption but affected by the needs and purposes of educators. We conduct research to advance knowledge and test theories, and we provide practitioners and policy makers with actionable, scientifically valid knowledge to improve education in the short term and long term.

Our R&D program is driven by eight key questions.

1. What is the extent and quality of the extant stock of educational knowledge?
2. How will our educational R&D program contribute to the stock of knowledge and be appropriate to the needs and educational purposes of Pacific educators and policy makers?
3. How are educational R&D priorities decided?
4. What do we mean by educational R&D (knowledge creation and practical knowledge of how to change and improve educational practices and systems)?
5. What are the quality assurance and quality control procedures for PREL's educational R&D?
6. How effective are the communication and dissemination of research to the Pacific region (knowledge transfer)?
7. How is research linked and used in PREL's and other development systems to build capacity in the region?
8. What is PREL's capacity to carry out its educational R&D program?

The objectives under Goal 1 operationalize how we undertake our program of educational research and development.

Goal 2: Capacity Development

Goal 1 is concerned with PREL's work in the production and transfer of scientifically valid research knowledge. Goal 2 focuses on research-based knowledge use and application by educational practitioners and policy makers to improve education. In our work to substantively

build and improve the capacity of educators and decision makers, we focus on improving skills and knowledge; the use of skills and knowledge in schools, classrooms, and educational support and policy-making systems; and changing and improving practice.

Like our educational R&D program, our capacity development is needs- and consumer-driven. It draws on what we collectively understand to be the core values of and assumptions about formal education and development and the vision for education among the people of the Pacific region and, at the same time, the local requirements of individual states and countries and, for some, federal mandates such as NCLB for territories and the U.S. Department of the Interior mandates for the Freely Associated States. In addition, our capacity development work is driven by explicit theories of change and a theory of action.

PREL's capacity development work typically introduces practitioners and policy makers to externally developed research-based products, tools, and processes with the expectation that they will transfer knowledge or skills to improve practice. In addition, an essential part of this process is the expectation that eventually educators and policy makers will develop the capacity to stand on their own. External support is not intended to be permanent. It is only a temporary support on the path to self-sufficiency and success. Our capacity development includes assistance in identifying, selecting, or designing solutions based on research to address educational problems; planning and design that leads to adapting research knowledge to school practice; training to implement such solutions; and other assistance necessary to encourage adoption or application of research (Turnbull, 1996).

We see capacity development in terms of how we link our R&D work with our consumers as a recursive process of assistance, development, and theory building and as a joint venture between producer and consumer. Knowledge production and use is focused on a single location—it is local, complex, and dynamic. External knowledge is used to stimulate or facilitate identification of solutions to educational needs or issues and is designed to achieve changes in individuals, groups, or organizations and perhaps even the environment, attitudes, skills, values, and visions of those involved. Research-based knowledge is represented more by processes of locally applied inquiry and reflection than by products of externally produced research (Hood, 2002).

We need to address the issue that a substantial body of evidence exists showing that practitioners—no matter what their field—do not turn to research findings in developing or refining their practices. And researchers do not generally turn to practitioners for inspiration in forming their research questions or for insight in interpreting their research results. There appears to be a fundamental gap between the two rooted in basic assumptions, beliefs, frames of reference, and profound cultural differences—different communities with very different values, beliefs, and ideologies (personal and professional goals, social systems, even time frames). To do this, we see our capacity development work being driven by the following core principles:

- Capacity development involves practitioners and policy makers as fully legitimate members of the educational R&D community, rather than its targets.
- Educational improvement requires educators and decision makers to learn, and PREL should use high-quality processes and resources to ensure learning (problem solving, professional conversation, reflection).

- Capacity development should use knowledge directly grounded in the real problems and accomplishments of classrooms, schools, districts, and states.
- Capacity development is a vehicle for a 2-way exchange between those who conduct research and development and practitioners and policy makers. In our capacity development work, we report on needs, capacities, and local insight, and bring an applied perspective to theoretical discussions.
- Capacity development involves a substantial use of tools provided by those with strong backgrounds in research and evaluation methods, process facilitation, and so forth, to help guide the work of educators and decision makers.

(Source: Leung, E. [2005]. *Task: To identify definitions of technical assistance and training, their differences, and criteria to design a program of technical assistance/training that it is of high quality*. Honolulu, HI: Pacific Resources for Education and Learning.)

Our capacity development work is driven by a set of key questions we use to make decisions about the areas of focus and learning, resources, and processes.

1. What is the character of the knowledge that is used?
2. Who is the user? What do we know/assume about the user?
3. What is the purpose of the use? What outcomes are intended?
4. What would be important to know about the use situation/context?
5. What do the answers to these questions imply for improving knowledge transfer, communication, and knowledge utilization?

The objectives under Goal 2 specify how we develop capacity in the Pacific region through developing infrastructures and systems to support capacity development, improving the capacity for teacher preparation and professional development, increasing the stock of teachers, and improving teaching and learning.

Goal 3: Organizational Development

How we plan and conduct our research and development and capacity development initiatives and programs of work requires PREL to be strategically organized and structured to facilitate the work, to acquire and develop the necessary core competencies and capacities to conduct quality research and provide high-quality products and services to the field, and to secure and sustain sufficient funding to have a substantive impact across the Pacific region. To do this, we continuously monitor and evaluate our work and how it is organized and supported by PREL.

In the same fashion that our goals of research and development and capacity development are driven by educational needs of the region and the purposes of practitioners and policy makers, so is how we organize and develop our organization.

Organizational development at PREL involves monitoring our performance organization-wide, evaluating our effectiveness in achieving our three strategic goals, and planning for our own improvement and further development. How well we perform and identify areas for improvement and development and our effectiveness in the field and as an organization are

used to strategically organize (and reorganize) and structure (and restructure) PREL to perform better and be more effective.

We measure PREL's performance by how many educators and decision makers we reach and serve and how well we build along a continuum awareness, knowledge, and skills, and capacity to change practice and improve student achievement. We recognize that all these outcomes are important and that different parts of our portfolio are used to achieve these outcomes; it is important that we continue to move our portfolio and its outcomes to scale across the region. To do this requires specific kinds of expertise and growing availability of resources and partners.

Evaluating our effectiveness focuses on five related factors: quality, relevance, utility, impact, and cost. We use three criteria for judging quality: the extent to which our products and services meet appropriate standards (industry standards for publications, national standards for professional development); "goodness of fit"—the extent to which our work, products, and services address and meet needs and purposes of potential consumers; and merit (intrinsic qualities) and worth (value).

We ensure our work is relevant by filtering our portfolio through the eyes of practitioners and policy makers to see how well it represents educators' and decision makers' contexts, attitudes, skills, values, visions, purposes, and real-life educational issues and problems. In addition, relevance has to do with how well our portfolio constructively builds on existing assets (capacities, competencies, knowledge, and skills) to improve educational practices.

The concept of utility has to do with the transfer and application of knowledge. What we have in PREL's portfolio must be of high quality and relevant, but also must be readily transferable and useable. For this to occur, practitioners must have a deep understanding of what is to be transferred (core knowledge) and how (essential skills). Educators and decision makers must have the opportunity to apply and use their new knowledge and skills, to see important results, and to reflect on their use of knowledge and skills and what happens as a result.

We use two measures to evaluate our impact: changes in practice and student achievement. Here we look at how knowledge production, transfer, and use changes what schools and teachers do, the kinds of policies and decisions affecting education, and how much student achievement is improving as a result.

We use assessments of our performance and evaluations of our effectiveness to make formative decisions about opportunities for improvement and further development and summative decisions about what to cut from our portfolio. It is these decisions that drive our organizational development—how we strategically select, acquire, develop, and allocate core competencies, capacities, and financial resources, and then strategically organize and structure PREL to undertake high-quality work and achieve higher levels of performance and impact.

Our organizational development is driven by a set of key questions.

1. Are we doing the right work?

2. Are we doing what we said we would do?
3. Are we doing our work well?
4. Is it having an important and meaningful impact in the region?
5. Are we optimally organized, structured, and funded to do the right work, do it well, and do it as we planned, and to maximize impact?

The objectives under Goal 3 specify how we operate as a learning, changing, and developing organization through securing funding, strengthening our core competencies and capacities, working collaboratively with our Board of Directors, and communicating with the field and key organizations in the knowledge production and transfer industry.