

PARENT CORNER

Wholesome Care, Wholesome Child

By Evelyn Joseph and Patricia von Oelhoffen

A *jiri In Ibbinini*, which means *Wholesome Care, Wholesome Child*, is a collaborative project between the RMI Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) program and Women United Together in the Marshall Islands (WUTMI). The *Ajiri In Ibbinini*

Center's (PATNC's) *Born to Learn* curriculum.

All parents desire higher academic achievement for their children, which makes parents willing learners. A new aspect of this project for parents is that *Ajiri In Ibbinini* is the only program in the RMI to apply the concept of personal home visits in parenting education.

Parents are more at ease at home, so learning is interactive and inclusive of other family members who also care for the children. Home visits allow for many of the cultural values and other traditional taboos to be taken into consideration, thus creating a natural setting for acculturation and unity of the new and old ideas for child rearing. Also new is the collaborative process for developing each child's learning and education plan (LEP) and specific individual development plan (IDP), used biweekly or monthly during the home visitations. Personalized individual plans respect and reflect the diversities of client settings socially, culturally, and economically. As traditional expectations surrounding child care change, more fathers are becoming involved caregivers for their children. The underlying goal of the program is to help both parents understand what to expect in each stage of their child's development, offer practical ways to encourage learning, and promote strong parent-child relationships. The LEP and IDP also serve as family guides to track the child's growth, development, and progress.

Parent educators are trained to assess other elements in the home setting, such as health and hygiene, which contribute to the wholesome health of the child. They offer related support such as dissemination of information on other available family services in the RMI, and by referrals to public health and family counseling—a WUTMI service.

The goals of *Ajiri In Ibbinini* have



Photo: Annic DeBrum

▷ Elbia Rusin teaches a young mother during a personal home visit as part of the RMI *Ajiri In Ibbinini* project.

been reached when parents are confident that the information they have been given and what they have learned is making a difference in their childcare practices, their child's potential for academic success, and their family.

Evelyn Joseph, Manager, School Effectiveness, Center for Learning and Teaching, and Patricia von Oelhoffen, Assistant, Center for Learning and Teaching, can be contacted at josephe@prel.org and vonoelhp@prel.org, respectively. ★

Helping parents improve and develop their skills has many benefits.

- Parents gain confidence, knowledge, and skills in parenting.
- Children are healthier.
- Children possess and demonstrate more advanced school readiness skills such as the following: knowing colors and matching shapes, counting and number values, showing understanding of book knowledge, naming the alphabet and letter sounds, and having rich vocabulary (advanced language development).
- Transition to school is easier.
- Parents are more involved in their child's schooling.



Photo: Marie Madison

▷ Grandparents play a valuable role in family education in teaching parenting skills.

project is working to improve existing early childhood educational services in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). The importance of improving existing early childhood educational services or creating provisions to include early childhood education in the public school system is one clear aspect of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. The project is meeting this challenge by helping parents and young children develop their confidence, knowledge, and school readiness through family education in parenting skills and child development. The project is educating families by using the national coalition Parents as Teachers National