

Commitment to and Accountability for Excellence in Education

By Harvey Lee

The 23rd Annual Pacific Educational Conference (PEC) was held this July in the Republic of Palau. Palau's Minister of Education opened the conference by saying "this is a tall order my fellow educators, but when it comes to the success of our students, we must recommit and hold ourselves individually and collectively accountable." He was addressing the theme of the conference, "Commitment and Accountability for Excellence in Education."

Jeannette Lim's keynote address, "Meaningful Education Reform and Fulfilling the Promise of No Child Left Behind," began with a moving personal story about English language learners (ELLs) and the potential success in a global competitive environment. She ended with three suggestions: (1) know and understand your content and performance standards, (2) know and understand your state assessments, and (3) for administrators—create a climate that values both teaching and learning for your faculty.

Equipped with a challenge to enhance individual teaching skills and be committed to being accountable for student success, the over 1,200 participants were able to select from more than 175 various workshops addressing the theme.

The workshops conducted by the Teacher of the Year awardees were highly attended by educators from across the region.

Participants came seeking tips to refine their teaching skills. Another highly attended workshop with standing room only introduced attendees to programming using Excel. Teachers and administrators crowded into the classroom to advance their programming skills. A workshop about integrating math, language, and science in

a project in the Philippines also drew many attendees. Participants came to hear about the project and gain ideas to use in their classrooms back home.

The closing remarks by Peleliu State Governor Jackson R. Ngiraingas, representing the Governors Association, left the participants with a thought provoking message.

"Correct me if I'm wrong," he said, "but I believe thousands of young peo-

ple from the small Pacific island nations graduate from secondary education every year, but a majority of them will never continue on to fulfill their human resource potential." He challenged the audience of educators and policy makers to create productive island nations.

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REL Client Survey 2005

By Scott Keir, PhD and Eunice Leung

In January 2006, a survey was conducted of educators in the Pacific region who were the recipients of Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) services or products. Of the 554 surveys distributed, we received 225 responses, representing a response rate of 41%. Teachers made up the majority of respondents, with central administrators, principals/assistant principals, and members of higher education also represented.

Although part of the survey was based on the quality of PREL's products and services, another important focus of the survey was to obtain feedback on educational needs in each of the respondents' jurisdictions. The educators participating in the survey were asked to rank needs. "Improving teacher quality" was the highest need area identified, followed by "strengthening the capacity of educational systems" and "addressing the needs of students with special needs." When asked how much progress PREL has made in these areas, the rankings followed a similar order, with improving teacher quality and strengthening the capacity of educational systems ranked higher than addressing the learning needs of students with special needs. However, respondents rated PREL's progress made in the past year in each of the need areas on average 20 percentage points lower than they rated the degree of importance for each area. This indicates that PREL could still put more effort into all of these need areas in the region.

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