

Three New Pacific Educators Begin Year of Residence at PREL

By Julian Heinz



Three new Pacific Educators in Residence (PEIRs) have begun work in Pacific Resources for Education and Learning's (PREL's) Honolulu office. Solipo Matai of American Samoa and Minoru Mori and Dita Williander of Chuuk, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), were selected from a large group of applicants to fill the positions for 2006–2007. The program is a collaborative effort of PREL and the state education agencies and institutions of higher education in the Pacific region to enhance and develop the personal and professional skills of Pacific educators in the context of PREL's ongoing work. PEIRs focus on learning experiences that maximize professional development opportunities and benefit their schools and communities. Most PEIRs remain employed in their home entities and return at the end of their 1-year term.

Mr. Matai's area of specialization will be teaching English language learners (ELLs) across the curriculum in middle and high school. He is employed by the American Samoa Department of Education (ASDOE) as English Language Arts Specialist for Secondary Education, and also chairs the ASDOE's Annual Secondary Schools Speech Festival. Through his year at PREL, Mr. Matai hopes to gain skills that will help him contribute to the development of the ASDOE's ELL program and help build community awareness of the problems ELLs face, including the risks of losing the indigenous language and students remaining at a remedial level in both languages.

Mr. Mori will focus on information technology (IT). A volunteer teacher of computer science at Xavier High

School, he hopes to improve his subject area knowledge and instructional skills in order to be a more effective teacher. Because of the lack of local expertise in IT, after his return to Chuuk, Mr. Mori hopes to provide technical support to the schools and departments of the local government and contribute to a curriculum guide for high school students in Chuuk.

Ms. Williander's area of concentration will be reading in grades 4–5. She is employed by the Chuuk State Department of Education (DOE) as a

mentor teacher. Ms. Williander is concerned that many students are struggling with reading, and wishes to help bring about changes in the way teachers and administrators think about and put into practice the teaching of reading. She looks forward to studying how children learn to read and putting that knowledge to work in Chuuk by training teachers and working with groups of struggling readers.

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Game-Based Learning: A Powerful Model for Educational Content

By Tony Tung

Educators often complain about competing against the Nintendo, Xbox, or PlayStation, when they should be embracing the powerful concepts behind what makes these games successful. Regardless of content, factors such as motivation, complex storylines, and deep interaction, amount to high levels of engagement, making game-based learning a perfect medium for educational content.

Games allow experiences—chances to try out scenarios in a safe environment free from teachers and peers—and allow us to create meaning from problem solving. Well-designed games can teach consequence and sometimes even values. The environment can open up our creative resources, integrating them with the absorption of educational material, all in a seamless engaging experience when designed properly. Academic subjects can be turned into an enjoyable experience, whether for momentary glory or longer immersive and rewarding experiences that require strategy, planning, and a sense of adventure. Mark Prensky, author of *Digital Game-Based Learning*, argues that current learning methods for young learners fail to engage learners used to

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