

American Samoa Develops a New Multi-Source Teacher Evaluation System

By Filemoni Lauilefue and Marylin Low, PhD

Twenty-six years ago, the American Samoa Department of Education (ASDOE) implemented a teacher evaluation system commonly known as the IOTA (Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities). Since this early beginning almost three decades ago, new research-based standards for teachers and designs for evaluation have emerged in the field of education. The federal government's legislated initiative, the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, has also impacted the department's decision to rethink and restructure its teacher evaluation program in American Samoa.

The *Teacher Quality Bill of 2001* contains teacher standards that the states and its territories were asked to consider as a basis for their teacher evaluation. They were reviewed, refined, and adapted to reflect the unique linguistic and cultural context of American Samoan schools. As a result, the newly drafted system

assesses the competence of teachers in eight areas: content and language, pedagogy, bilingual education (Samoan and English), resourcefulness, diversity, assessment, parent and community involvement, and professionalism. When implemented, the system will guide a collaborative effort between teachers, instructional leaders, and ASDOE staff to create the conditions in which all students can learn.

To ensure and promote quality teaching and learning, the ASDOE's evaluation system will gather information from multiple sources and in multiple ways. Included are observations of classroom teaching, including pre- and post-conferencing and teacher self-assessments, student work sample reviews, and feedback on teaching and learning from students and parents. Instructional leaders play a key role in the teacher evaluation system, bringing their skills and knowledge to bear in classroom obser-

ventions and the reflective conversations that come before and after each observation.

The new system has two purposes. It functions to improve teacher skill and knowledge by gathering evidence of teaching strengths and needs and using the evidence to inform school- and island-wide professional development decisions. It also functions to provide information to the department about the quality of teaching in its schools. Currently under review by various key groups within the ASDOE, it should be ready for piloting in October 2007, and implemented throughout the department by March 2008.

Filemoni Lauilefue, Assistant Director, American Samoa Department of Education Teacher Quality Office, may be contacted at filemonilauilefue@yahoo.com. Marylin Low, PhD, Senior Specialist, PREL, may be contacted at lowm@prel.org.

