

PD and Assessment Support Literacy Gains in Pacific Schools

By Reed Early and Ormond Hammond

Efforts to improve reading skills in the Pacific are paying off. Through its Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory (Pacific REL), PREL works with schools to support early reading literacy through effective professional development (PD). Co-Development Partner (CDP) schools, one in each U.S.-affiliated Pacific state or territory, participate in the Pacific Communities with High-performance in Literacy Development (Pacific CHILD) project. Improved assessments and data management systems allow for quick access to data through the Pacific REL. As a result, teachers and administrators can draw more accurate and timely conclusions about needed instructional interventions and PD planning.

A recent internal evaluation of the Pacific REL revealed that students in grades 1-4 show statistically significant increases in the following areas:

- alphabet letter identification,
- alphabet sound recognition,
- concepts about print,
- listening and retelling, and
- sight word identification.

Better Instruction

The evaluation report is based on assessment data, REL client surveys, and PD session feedback forms. Participants at Pacific CHILD schools and in REL PD workshops report high levels of satisfaction on ratings of quality, usefulness, and potential impact. In addition, a new observational measure pioneered by the REL (the PDRO, or Professional Development in Reading Observation) provides promising formative information on six standards for effective PD. (See "Assessing PD Delivery," *Pacific Educator*, April 2003, available online at www.prel.org/products/paced/apr03/re_assessing1.htm.)

Is REL PD associated with better classroom instruction? The Early Language and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO) showed positive changes in literacy teaching effectiveness in Pacific CHILD schools from fall to spring observations. ELLCO is used nationally to observe classrooms, teaching, and literacy activities. It includes several sub-instruments each with its own subscale:

- literacy environment checklist,
- classroom observation,
- language/literacy/curriculum, and
- literacy activities rating scale.

Faster Access

As in any developmental program, there are also lessons to be learned. Suggestions for improvement include increasing the amount of practice, time, and equipment available for several key classroom activities.

In a few months, new software and training will make it possible for CDP schools to independently generate reports and access information even more rapidly. Educators can discuss and compare results with teachers and reading specialists in other Pacific island communities. Through data collection and analysis and by using the results to inform instruction, educators now have greater tools at their disposal to support ongoing efforts to improve early reading literacy in the Pacific.

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