

# PD IN AMERICAN SAMOA

## A School That Studies Together...

By Patricia Sataua and Lee Noto

Siliaga Elementary School is a small school nestled in the mountains in American Samoa. For the past 5 years, it has been involved with Pacific Resources for Education and Learning's (PREL's) Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) as a partner school that has focused on effective professional development (PD) in early reading. Here, the site-based reading specialist answers some questions about teacher study groups.

### What is a study group?

A study group is a cluster of teachers who meet regularly for focused discussions on how to adopt and implement new innovations in the classroom. This group meets consistently over time, sharing and reflecting, as they put new skills and strategies into practice in their classrooms.

### What are the benefits of a study group?

Study groups offer teachers a community



Photo: Lee Noto

▷ Study groups offer teachers a community in which they can share knowledge.

to share professional and experiential knowledge. Support for each other as professionals and for problem solving are incentives for being part of the group, reducing the level of isolation teachers often feel.

### How do you start a study group?

PD providers set up study groups by invit-

ing interested teachers. In the initial meeting, teachers are asked to generate topics of interest for discussion and to decide on when time to meet. Most important is the teachers' agreement to commit their time and effort to work together.

### Who are the participants in a study group?

Teachers who are interested in professional growth and who want to improve classroom instruction participate. Often, when teachers of the same grade level or of the same content area are grouped, the study groups are more meaningful.

### What does a study group look and sound like?

The facilitator organizes the group, promoting a sense of community. Teachers' voices are valued as they inquire about new approaches, debate issues related to a topic, reflect on professional articles or new teaching techniques, and share classroom experiences. Teachers analyze and interpret teaching and learning practices.

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