

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Community Involvement Assists School Improvement

By Pam Legdesog

Too often the task of planning for school improvement is limited to school personnel. Planning sessions take place during staff meetings and through a variety of other internal means. The downside to this approach is that education does not take place in a vacuum. Community members, outside organizations, and private businesses have tremendous impact on schooling. The input of these groups, as well as sensitivity to local cultures, can be critical for effective planning and implementation. Research tells us that one of the keys to successful planning is the appropriate involvement of all key partners.

In Yap, many schools are located far from the Department of Education's Central Office. For these schools, strong partnerships involving traditional leaders and other community members have played a significant role in successful school improvement efforts. At Maap Community School, for example, the involvement of a diverse group of partners in math



Photo: Pam Legdesog

▷ As part of the school improvement process, Maap community members explore hands-on instructional approaches.

and science improvement planning sessions greatly enhanced implementation activities.

Maap convened school staff, math and science curriculum specialists, and Central Office administrators as well as traditional leaders and community members to develop the Maap School Math and Science Improvement Plan. Community members also attended some of the training events at the school, increasing their knowledge about changes in the ways mathematics and science are taught.

As a result, parent attendance at school mathematics and science fairs has improved, and community members have donated time and resources to support hands-on instructional approaches. By working together, school and community members assured a very successful implementation of the school improvement process

at Maap Community School.

Pam Legdesog is a Field-Based Specialist for the Pacific Mathematics and Science Regional Consortium at PREL.



▷ Pacific Educational Conference presenter Tom Ross showed teachers how to use mobile construction to demonstrate mathematical and scientific concepts such as fulcrums, levers, and balance. Ross's workshop, entitled "Balance and Motion in Science and Art: Using Local Resources to Create a Mobile," also related mobiles to kinetic art and the works of Alexander Calder. Workshop participants created mobiles from local resources, including flowers, sticks, stones, seedpods, and sea glass.



Photos: Mike Hartlaub

▷ This sea glass mobile, created for the "Balance and Motion" workshop, was donated by presenter Tom Ross to the science classroom at Pacific Island Central School in Pohnpei, along with tools, string, glue, wire, and miscellaneous objects for future experiments in kinetic art.