



Reflections on Our Implementation of NCLB

By Dr. Rita Hocog Inos

Accountability is a key term in the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) legislation. Expectations related to accountability have created anxiety on the part of all involved in educating students. This was the case in our schools and in our central office operations in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). The how, what, when, and where of student learning accountability needed to be exposed, considered, developed, and implemented. What are the implications of NCLB in the day-to-day operations of teaching and learning? Can one make meaningful advances to the expectations of NCLB? We in the CNMI, along with other jurisdictions in the Pacific, stepped up to the plate and began the journey of improving student learning outcomes through data driven decisions.

In our small island schools, teachers and school administrators gather in their school learning teams to share, discuss, review, and analyze student learning data to determine how well students are learning their lessons, as well as to find out what teachers need to learn more about in order for their students to grow and achieve. Decisions about students and teachers and their learning needs must be made based on achievement data. Standards-based education, classroom assessments based on content and performance standards, professional development based on students' academic achievement data, and highly qualified teachers are basic ingredients to the school improvement process in our island schools. Accountability based on students academic achievement and progress in learning became the focus of every member of our learning community. Funding through NCLB made it possible to invest resources in standards, assessments, teacher quality, and accountability.

Charting a course and vision of excellence using student learning data was the only way to go. For the schools and their communities, the charting of progress is daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly. Supported by our federal partners, we focus our attention fully on content and performance standards, assessment that speaks to the content and performance standards, and professional development specifically tailored to meet the needs of teachers based on students' learning performance.

To date, we have made tremendous progress in our educational programs and services for students. The initiative undertaken in the development of

assessments based on the CNMI Standards and Benchmarks was key in focusing our attention on accountability and student learning. From the outset, teachers and administrators were involved in the design and development of the tools that will enable our schools and the school system to see students growing and achieving what is expected of them.



Photo by Ray Wong

Rita Hocog Inos, EdD, PREL Board Chair,
may be contacted at inosr@pss.cnmi.mp.

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