

## Language Acquisition and English Language Learners



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**G**reetings everyone!  
It is a privilege to introduce this issue of *Pacific Educator*. As I begin, I want to pay my respects to three extraordinary educators who have held the position of Board Chairperson since I first joined the PREL board in 2000. They are Henry Falan, Rita Hocog Inos, and the late Malaetele Lui Tuitele. Each has provided wise, courageous, and insightful leadership to PREL, and each has helped make PREL the respected educational research organization and service provider that it is today.

The theme for this spring 2007 issue of *Pacific Educator* is language acquisition and English language learners (ELLs), relatively simple terms that cover a complex array of issues, concerns, policies, and practices. The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB), signed into law just over 5 years ago and now up for reauthorization, has at its heart closing the often wide gap between achievement levels of students who find success in school and those who do not. A high percentage of those who do not find success in school are ELLs. With few exceptions, the reality in the U.S.-affiliated Pacific is that proficiency in the English language is a fundamental requirement for school success.

In the PREL service region, the State of Hawai'i, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories of Guam and American Samoa are, to varying degrees, obligated by the requirements of NCLB to raise student achievement levels. But the search to find and implement effective programs and policies to address the pressing needs of ELLs is shared by all the entities in the region. One of PREL's continuing contributions to finding answers has been a focus on enhancing the skills of classroom teachers in developing early childhood literacy. But ELLs are also MLLs (mathematics language learners), and terrific work has been done in this area as well. In addition, we also find cutting-edge work in the use of the visual and dramatic arts in teaching and enhancing literacy. And this is just a slice of so much that is happening.

It is evident that work in the areas of language acquisition and ELLs is critically important to our region. But we do this work while simultaneously searching for ways to enhance the knowledge and use of the indigenous languages of Pacific children. While a necessary target of NCLB requirements is learning English for school success, we also need to develop ways to make sure that no child's language is left behind and no child's culture is left behind either. It will be a wonderful day if the critical research spurred by NCLB also results in the future in more effective ways to teach indigenous languages and, hence, help strengthen Pacific cultures. I hope you enjoy this issue of *Pacific Educator*. Happy reading!



Photo by Ray Wong

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