

Technology Supports for Deaf Education and Deaf Community Building in American Samoa

By

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a 2-year collaborative intervention to build capacity in deaf education in American Samoa. The American Samoa Deaf Education (ASDE) Project included the American Samoa Department of Education (Special Education Division), the University of Hawai'i Center on Disability Studies, and the Gallaudet University Regional Center. This paper describes educational interventions aimed at improving services for deaf children, valuing American Sign Language, and promoting deaf cultural pride. Video and telecommunications technologies were used to promote role modeling, visual storytelling, and distance education.

Samoa. In order to better serve American Samoa's deaf community, the relationship was extended in 1998 to include the Gallaudet University Regional Center, also located in Hawai'i, which has as its mission to promote deaf education throughout the Pacific Basin (i.e., Hawai'i, American Samoa, and U.S.-affiliated entities in Micronesia). Through this partnership, the goals of the American Samoa Deaf Education (ASDE) Project were conceived. These goals are as follows:

- To train Samoan teachers in American Sign Language (ASL) and deaf education techniques
- To equip deaf education classrooms with media and technology for communication and learning
- To promote deaf community building through exposure to deaf role models, visual storytelling, video teleconferencing, and interisland teacher exchanges

INTRODUCTION

The Special Education Division of the American Samoa Department of Education has a longstanding relationship with the University of Hawai'i (UH) Center on Disability Studies to train and support special education teachers in American

Samoa. It was an ambitious project, enthusiastically embraced by all of the stakeholders. The ASDE Project was intended to develop a mission-driven deaf education program in American Samoa. The deaf program, such as it was, had been folded into the larger Special Education Division without a clear identity or mission. The goal was to prepare four "teachers" earning bachelor's degrees, and a lead teacher earning a master's degree, so that they might gain the credibility and authority to become a functioning unit.

This paper has never been presented in whole or in part.

Together, these teachers were serving 8 to 10 deaf or hard-of-hearing youth and children. Most of the teachers were at a beginning level of ASL acquisition and without formal training in deaf education. The lead teacher, Meanoa McFall, was the notable exception. She had received postgraduate training in deaf education at a prestigious U.S. university; was fluent in ASL; and was enthusiastic to engage in leadership development, including completion of a master's degree. Meanoa, an aide, and four deaf high school girls had a classroom of their own at the vocational high school. The younger children, by contrast, were dispersed in village schools and assigned to the less experienced teachers.

As a first order of business, Meanoa enrolled as a master's student at the UH in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, with an emphasis in deaf education and assistive technology, under the guidance of faculty from both the Gallaudet University Regional Center (Nancy Bridenbaugh and Linda Lambrecht) and the UH Center on Disability Studies (Dr. James Skouge, author of this paper). Nancy, the Director of the Gallaudet University Regional Center, and Linda, a deaf role model and faculty member, agreed to make two week-long annual site visits to American Samoa. I committed to four annual visits. Meanoa agreed to spend two summers studying in Hawai'i to meet her university residency requirements. The rest of her coursework was to be completed in American Samoa under the guidance of the faculty in Hawai'i. The project was intended to last 2 years, culminating with Meanoa's completion of her master's degree and promotion to a deaf education specialist position within the American Samoa Department of Education.

This paper describes the values and elements of this cross-cultural deaf education training initiative, addressing issues of deaf community building, role modeling, storytelling, on-island consultation, media, and distance learning.

DEAF COMMUNITY BUILDING: LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Central to our philosophy is the belief that deaf community building should be at the heart of deaf education. Deaf communities are built around a shared history, culture, and language (in this case, ASL). In American Samoa, these foundational elements were not well established. For the most part, deaf persons in American Samoa lived in relative isolation from one another, immersed in the "hearing world" of their villages. Some deaf children were unidentified by school officials and did not attend school. Deaf children's family members who were hearing did not, themselves, speak ASL or communicate with their children in sign language. The situation could best be described as one of isolation and invisibility (which is still the norm in much of the world).

All of the interventions described below were intended to contribute to deaf community building, while at the same time improving school-based services and family supports.

ROLE MODELING AND VISUAL STORYTELLING

It is a guiding principle of the Gallaudet University Regional Center that deaf children and their families benefit from exposure to deaf role models. Linda Lambrecht fulfilled this requirement. She is fluent in ASL, literate in English, college educated, proud of her deaf culture, born and raised in Hawai'i in a family of deaf parents, familiar with island lifestyles, and an experienced teacher educator at the Gallaudet University Regional Center serving deaf students from across the Pacific Basin. Linda enthusiastically agreed to become a project role model and associate, alongside Nancy Bridenbaugh, who has a master's degree in deaf education and was the center director, and myself, who, although relatively inexperienced in deaf education, was an experienced bilingual special educator and educational technologist with a longstanding relationship with special education in American Samoa.

During their on-island visits, Linda and Nancy anchored their efforts at the high school with Meanoa and her students—supporting them, among other things, to learn to interpret storybooks in ASL that, in turn, they could share with younger deaf children and their families (Schleper, 1997; 2001; 2006).

In the beginning, this was accomplished using "big books," which were showcased on an easel at the front of the classroom. Linda interpreted each page using a mix of ASL, gesture, and pantomime, using the pictures as springboards for story telling. Linda's interpretations extended beyond the printed text, intending to promote ASL fluency, which would then lead to better comprehension of the text and enhance English literacy. Students were invited to come forward to provide their own interpretations of the meaning behind the text, rather than sign each sentence word for word. The impact on the deaf teenagers was palpable. They soon understood the meaning of the text they were reading through rehearsing and interpreting the big books with the same enthusiasm that was being modeled.

This teaching strategy was supported in bilingual education research: learners need to acquire "basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)" as a pre-requisite to "cognitive-academic learning proficiency (CALP)" (Cummins, 2001). Meanoa's students were not fluent in ASL or English and, in fact, were perhaps ashamed to use ASL in public."

During this time, my task was to teach the girls to videotape the story telling. With a camera mounted on a tripod, we learned to "zoom in" on the illustrations, and "zoom out" to the storyteller. We encouraged the storytellers to point to elements in the pictures before signing, so that we knew when to

pan and zoom. (We became quite practiced; so much so, in fact, that in our 2nd year, the technique became refined to include Samoan language narration along with the ASL, with the books and tapes sent to students' homes to promote family literacy—an activity that was to become Meanoa's master's project. In the 1st year, however, it was enough that we produced and reviewed the videotapes in the classroom. A video camera, tripod, television, and video cassette recorder (VCR) became permanent fixtures in Meanoa's classroom.

These literacy techniques became an everyday part of Meanoa's deaf education curriculum, permitting the high school girls to share ASL both among themselves and with the hearing world. Meanoa and her students began sharing the storybooks in the classrooms of the younger deaf children and their hearing peers. It was through this venue that we learned firsthand of the motivational power of role modeling and storytelling. The younger children (hearing and deaf alike) watched and participated with joy—but the younger deaf children, in particular, seemed to understand instinctively that the older girls were deaf like them. Additionally, Meanoa and her students introduced an ASL foreign language class as an elective at the high school. The high school girls were no longer shy about signing in public. In fact, ASL was becoming a status symbol of sorts.

VIDEO LETTERS

On one occasion, upon my return to Honolulu, I met with several high school teachers at the state's residential deaf school to request permission to work with some of their deaf students to produce a video letter that I could deliver to the Samoan students, with the promise that the Samoans would produce one in return. They agreed to the proposal. Over the next several weeks, the Hawaiian youth produced an hour-long, rambling tour of their school campus, showing off everything from the cafeteria to the library. A young deaf woman acted as host, smiling and gesturing to the camera to join her in a walking tour. I left the film entirely unedited, delivering it to the Samoan girls just as it had been shot.

The Hawaiian video letter was a resounding success. Even Meanoa, who knew the girls very well, was surprised at how many times the girls viewed and reviewed the tape. The girls sat glued to the VCR, pausing and rewinding the tape, imitating and acquiring new language, and negotiating meanings among themselves. They were literally deconstructing the video into its communicative parts. "Would you like to produce a video letter in return?" I queried. The affirmative response was overwhelming, mixed with pleas to meet the Hawaiian youth in person.

I had invited Mary Kelly, a film maker and friend, to accompany me on this particular trip, which proved ideal for the undertaking. Mary dedicated herself to working with the

students. The outcome was a video letter, in which the girls shared the beauty of their island, including visits to the museum, market, restaurants, and beaches. Some weeks later, the video was hand-delivered to the youth and their teachers in Hawai'i, who enjoyed it. It may have been with less "determination" than the Samoan youth, but they appreciated it nonetheless. Subsequently, we scheduled a video teleconference (VTC), finally permitting the youth to meet one another in real time. This event, too, impacted the Samoan girls. The VTC was recorded and reviewed numerous times thereafter.

DEAF AWARENESS WEEK

In spring 1999, the American Samoa Department of Education and the American Samoa Community College introduced an island-wide Deaf Awareness Week, a celebration that was subsequently to become an annual event. Linda and another deaf role model from the Gallaudet University Regional Center participated, offering an intensive week-long workshop on ASL and deaf culture. The workshop was held in a central government office building and was open to anyone on the island interested in participating, including deaf children and adults, family members, and teachers. The event was publicized both in the Samoa News and on local television. The turnout was unexpectedly large, with perhaps 40 participants attending the daily workshops. The techniques used for reading aloud (as previously described) were employed amid evident joy and laughter. The visual storytelling using ASL seemed utterly congruent with the Samoan learning style.

A deaf theater troupe from the independent nation of Samoa joined in the festivities, providing entertainment in village churches in the evenings. The territorial governor closed the week-long celebration by hosting a gala event at the Rainmaker Hotel, with DJ music amplified to decibels perhaps never before heard on the island. Certificates were presented. Gifts were given. The feeling of deaf pride was palpable.

DISTANCE EDUCATION: ASL

Soon thereafter, upon returning to Hawai'i, we initiated a weekly 2-hour VTC in which Linda continued teaching ASL to the Samoan community through interactive television. Linda connected through studios at the UH College of Education, with Meanoa facilitating on the other end in American Samoa. The momentum of the Deaf Awareness Week was maintained, with 15 to 20 active participants participating throughout the year-long VTC initiative.

The success of this videoconferencing project was perhaps surprising. Although Meanoa required her teachers to participate, the many deaf individuals and parents who participated came voluntarily. Textbooks were used and provided

free of charge. The practice of sharing stories and storybooks, however, continued to be a mainstay of the program. On the Hawai'i end, we hired a Samoan graduate student named Mua Porotesano to provide technical assistance. Mua could speak Samoan when required, and could phone for technical help when faced with technical difficulties.

Video conferencing, by the way, is different from "studio-based" television production. Television studios typically have camera operators who can pan and zoom one or several cameras in order to attain the appropriate shot. By contrast, our video conferencing studio consisted of a single "fixed" camera, much like a web cam, that could neither pan nor zoom. To accommodate Linda's teaching style (which was both visual and physical), we cleared the "set" of furniture, allowing her to stand directly in front the camera, moving closer or further away as she chose. In this way, illustrations could be held up directly to the camera for close-ups. Although the time passed quickly, after 2 hours of this physical form of instruction, everyone was quite exhausted.

The weekly VTCs provided the value added component of bringing together the deaf community in American Samoa. Persons of many backgrounds were coming to share the joy of deaf culture and language and to feel the energy of a charismatic deaf role model whom they had come to know through face-to-face visits. This is particularly noteworthy because transportation in American Samoa can be challenging, which makes it even more remarkable that such a large group of people would continue meeting over a sustained period of time (totaling 24 weeks).

At the end of the year, the Samoan teachers were hosted by the Gallaudet University Regional Center to attend a deaf education training session in Honolulu, attended by deaf educators from across the Pacific Basin. It was a fitting culmination and celebration of the 2-year effort.

Meanoa graduated from the UH with her master's degree in spring 2002. Soon thereafter, she became the first deaf educator to direct the program in American Samoa. Although this signaled the end of the association with the Gallaudet University Regional Center, the UH Center on Disability Studies continues to provide support, as needed, to the ASDE program.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Best practices for deaf education in the Pacific include the following recommendations:

- Promote coursework in ASL and welcome both the deaf and "hearing" communities to participate.
- Celebrate Deaf Awareness Week.
- Employ video and multimedia technologies to create stories signed in ASL.

- Support families of deaf children to learn ASL and to read to their children using ASL.
- Include deaf role models in training and outreach programs.
- Provide ongoing opportunities for the deaf community to come together to experience pride in deaf culture and language.
- Build bridges with other deaf communities across the Pacific islands to promote language learning and cultural exchange, including video conferencing.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

It is now 4 years since this project ended. Technologies have changed and so have opportunities for distance education and community building. I now teach media and assistive technology in the Special Education Department at the UH. My opportunities to travel and work in American Samoa have diminished. Recently, however, I became associated with a cohort of deaf educators who are earning master's degrees in our department. One of the cohort interns is a teacher who is on leave from the deaf education program in American Samoa to earn his degree. I have asked to become his advisor, believing that perhaps we can now utilize Internet-based video conferencing to directly connect classrooms in Hawai'i with classrooms in American Samoa. After all, we have the bandwidth and, for less than the price of a ticket to Samoa, we can purchase computers with built-in webcams! Perhaps this is a master's project in the making—one that can reconnect us in a web of community building.

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Rethinking Education In Micronesia (Strengthening Leadership and Commitment to Education)

By

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To “rethink education” in Micronesia is a challenging, yet necessary, task and endless endeavor. The struggle to provide quality education to as many students as possible seems an endless task in this region, due to the fact that we continually experience rapid changes in both living and learning environments in Micronesia. Each local education agency and state education agency has been constantly working to bring about improvements in education. But the time has come for educators, leaders, and community members in this region to ask serious questions as we “rethink education” in Micronesia—have we been able to really assess the impact of all the efforts we have made over the years to “improve” the educational system to benefit the children in order to meet the challenges of the 21st century?

There are a number of key questions to ask ourselves. How successful was the implementation effort of various programs we have developed and tried to implement in our schools in the past? How are we doing in terms of sustainability of programs and practices that have been proven successful in yielding students’ high performance and success? How has the accountability and commitment to education by our leaders, parents, and community members been? I believe well thought out answers to these questions will provide us with some understanding that can guide us as we “rethink education” in this region.

To rethink education in Micronesia, we have to have a better understanding of the broad spectrum of experience this region encompasses. Micronesia represents a broad range of linguistic and cultural diversity; and a broad spectrum of experience, knowledge, and diversity; and, of course, a variety of educational needs.

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Some of our problems, frankly, have come from both inside and outside of our region. Whenever educators, policy makers, and service providers perform their jobs without really understanding the unique situations and how students learn in island settings, we have problems. We need knowledgeable educators, policy makers, and service providers who know that the challenges of providing quality education to all of our students in Woleiai, Chuuk, Guam, the Marshalls, Palau, and Saipan are not exactly the same. And they certainly are not the same as those of Honolulu, Los Angeles, or the Virgin Islands.

While there are, of course, many similarities between us in Micronesia, our differences are meaningful and important to understand. Sometimes, strategies that work in Los Angeles can be transplanted almost totally and work somewhere in the region. But it should also not come as a surprise to anyone when those strategies, without any modification, don’t work in other settings in Micronesia.

To understand the local struggle for quality education in Micronesia is to know the range of conditions that exist in the region in terms of past and present school improvement efforts.

GENERAL CLIMATE

In terms of general climate, some of our entities continue to have schools where the school community does share a strong sense of purpose. The morale of all involved is very high, success in school is experienced by most students, and the school is viewed as a place of learning by all concerned. The reverse is also true; we have schools that are at the other end of the continuum. These schools seem to lack people committed to providing quality education. The staff seems to only function from one pay check to the next. There is no real team effort. One can find only a few individuals among the students, staff, and community who seem to care anything about the school or the educational process.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

With regard to the physical environment of the schools, the range is, perhaps, greatest. There are locations within Micronesia where there are attractive, stimulating classrooms and facilities that are very conducive to effective learning and teaching. They are structurally safe, clean, well lit, climate controlled, and well-equipped. Students can be found working on computers using interactive videos and other multimedia materials and equipment. The classrooms are organized in a manner that invites student learning. Communication and accessibility to Central Office is only a phone call or short drive away.

But as we are well aware, there are still many schools where the physical conditions are quite the opposite. Local educators struggle with a lack of classrooms; three grades may be in the same classroom for split, half-day sessions; blackboards have no chalk, or there is chalk with no blackboard; rain is coming in through the ceiling; on extremely hot afternoons, the air is so still and warm that it is very difficult to keep anyone on task; there is no drinking water or sanitary toilet facilities; no electricity; weekly power outages; no copier, no typewriter, no slide projector, and no radio communication to the Central Office, which can be as far away as a few days by boat.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS

The situation regarding the status of curriculum frameworks is also broad range. Some of the local educational agencies have articulated well-placed, relevant, dynamic courses of study for the various content areas. The information is “state of the art,” and the students who graduate from their programs will be very knowledgeable of their cultural heritage, languages, surroundings, environment, and the challenges that will face them as Pacific Islanders, and responsible participants in a global community. And yet, the issue of the lack of implementation and sustainability of successful programs continues, and it can hinder student learning to a higher standard. At the same time, there are local educational agencies that still have much to do before the curricula can afford any of their students the foundation for higher learning and thinking skills.

INSTRUCTION

In Micronesia, instruction can be extremely strong or extremely weak. Some teachers are talented, well-prepared, and trained to address the different learning needs of their students and families. Their students are engaged as active learners. Teachers can be seen coaching each other to excellence. Integrated curriculum activities, whole language activities, bilingual instructional

strategies, cooperative learning strategies, learning centers, parent/community involvement, and literacy campaigns are all part of the regular instructional program.

We also have many classrooms where, day after day, teachers can be found only copying and reading directly from the textbook to their students. Very few higher order questions are asked by the teachers; very little student involvement or interest can be detected; homework assignments are given automatically, often before the lesson has even been taught. There are many teachers who need to be trained for the first time and others who need to be retrained. They have a small amount of knowledge, and not a lot of skill. For some, their concept of what they need to do to deliver effective instruction is, at best, confused.

PARENT/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

In Micronesia, there are schools that are fortunate to have active and effective parent/community involvement in education. The participation of parents and community members can be seen in all aspects of the schools' programs. They attend; they participate; they teach; they tutor; they help make curriculum and instructional materials; they cook; they buy; and they make decisions that influence the quality of educational delivery. Most of the people involved with education in the region desire and recognize the importance of parent and community participation. They just don't have it at the level needed yet. And then there are some local educators who are of the mind that parent involvement is too troublesome, time consuming, and lacking any correlation with school success and student achievement.

STAFF, TEACHER, AND STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

In the area of staff, teacher, and student development, some of the schools within the region have comprehensive training and development programs that go to great lengths to ensure students and staff alike receive the programs and exposure that they need. Teacher in-service training is well-placed, well-timed, thorough, and relevant. Credentialing programs are not only designed to comply with personnel offices' needs, but are relevant to what the students need.

Extracurricular student development programs for a number of students include student leadership activities, student government, debate clubs, language clubs, sports teams, Close-Up participation, traditional dancing groups, and choir. At the other end of the spectrum, there are some schools where teachers' in-service training and credentialing yield minimal improvement in the classrooms, where students are bored, uninvolved, and have few opportunities to develop intellectually, socially, and physically.

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Finally, looking at educational leadership, there are political appointees who are excellent and those who are not. From Central Office administration to the schools, the profile of educational leaders is again varied. Some of the schools are fortunate to have qualified, dedicated leaders with vision and ability to facilitate important learning improvements. There are team leaders who keep people on task and whom working colleagues and community respect. It is by their example that teachers are able to stay on track and stay committed to servicing all students well. Some of the school systems have administrators who are highly experienced and have had ample training to help them do their job.

On the other hand, there are still schools in Micronesia where the school administrators are not facilitating improvements. In fact, they are a part of the problem. A few of the educational leaders should have never been given their positions. They appear to have no dedication to education, excellence, or quality education, and, the fact is, no amount of training may be enough to change them. Fortunately, the vast majority of educational leaders in Micronesia are not this way. They simply need appropriate support, training, supervision, and coaching to do their job better. It is difficult to do the job of an educational administrator when you only have a high school diploma; or you were selected by the council or chief of the village and told to do the job; or you became the school principal because no one else in your community was willing to do it; or you were forced to do the job and will still have to maintain a full teaching load, and financial incentives and greater prestige would not be forthcoming.

The good news is that in Micronesia school improvement is happening. It is only due to a number of “deficiencies” that progress has been slow. Like many of the school districts in the continental U.S. and other places in the world, Micronesian schools, too, lack adequate numbers of qualified personnel, training, fiscal resources, programs, policies, community awareness and support, adequate incentive programs, educationally-oriented politicians, and the kind of broad-based understanding that is needed to make sweeping improvements.

Progress is happening. Each of the educational entities is moving forward. It is important to keep in mind, however, that people in this region are not all in the same exact place to begin with. Yes, they are from Micronesia, and they have much in common, but they are also very unique from each other. There are different geographical, political, organizational, and economic realities. It is time to use the knowledge, not ignorance of the unique situations in this region to effectively problem solve and improve education. Trust must be built and maintained among Micronesian educators and leaders. The capacity and confidence of local people must be developed and sustained. Educational leaders must have the capacity and confidence to improve educational systems and

the sensibility about what is right and good for Micronesian children. Too often, programs, consultants, and foreign administrators come to Micronesia and attempt to “build for Micronesians” what they think is quality educational opportunity and this is done sometimes with little or no regard for the values, culture, histories, traditional ways of decision making and working together, linguistic heritage, or economic realities. This has not been helpful, and it is not what the people need. Micronesian educational leaders should have the capacity to effectively utilize the wealth of knowledge and expertise from service providers and educational consultants to meet the needs of the children. With great educational leaders, the deficiencies that we continue to see in school improvement efforts—in the areas of school climate and environment, curriculum and instruction, personnel development and teacher training, parent and community involvement in school activities, and the commitment of community leaders to education—can be minimized, and student success will be realized. There is a need to develop great educational leaders in Micronesian education systems.

WHAT THEN DO WE NEED IN MICRONESIA IN TERMS OF QUALITY EDUCATION?

I believe that most great schools have great leaders. And the key to success in student achievement in school is simply to have great educational leaders in education systems and schools that can facilitate learning. But as I mentioned above, many of our schools do not have educational leaders who understand what it takes to effectively run successful schools. How can effective school leadership be defined in the context of contemporary Micronesian society with the influx of diversity of values and beliefs that have impacted the traditional core values and beliefs for great community leaders? Finding the right answer today, where there are many contributing factors for Micronesian students still struggling to succeed in school, is a challenging but important task for Micronesian educators and community leaders in taking on the important task of rethinking education in Micronesia.

As we seek to improve education in Micronesia, I strongly believe that we must develop capacity and sustainability for great school leaders. We must come up with a mission to develop new educational leadership capacity that fosters high academic achievement of every child by attracting, preparing, supporting, and sustaining the next generation of outstanding leaders for Micronesian public schools. We must seek to build and share understanding of how effective leadership for educational improvement is evolving in schools across the region and help create programs that assist schools and entities in rethinking leadership functions, roles, and practices, and come up with effective leadership focusing on teaching and learning. This will help improve the quality of leadership in public education and improve effectiveness of

school leaders (principals, chiefs, directors, ministers, superintendents) in enhancing accountability, management, and operations of the public school system.

New effort should include school leadership improvement curriculum that incorporates common themes impacting school leadership, such as parent involvement, diversity, and education policy and reform, and be organized into four strands: (1) transformational leadership, which addresses the essence of leadership—the skills, insight, perspectives, personal voice and authority, and change management strategies necessary to lead a school that has high expectations for every child; (2) instructional leadership, which addresses high-quality instruction, thoughtful alignment of curriculum, standards and assessment, effective use of data to drive student achievement, and high-functioning teacher teams; (3) operational leadership, which addresses building and organizational management that supports high student achievement and a positive school culture; and (4) local situation/job context, which addresses the local knowledge, networks, and skills a successful leader needs to support a high-quality school.

A new leadership development program must also be designed to strengthen school and community leaders as they address their own local educational issues: to develop collaborative leadership in order to advance new visions of learning in local communities, develop leadership action related to issues affecting the quality and equity of teaching and learning, and bring new people into leadership whose voices offer new and different perspectives to catalyzing and sustaining community and educational change.

The new paradigm of educational leadership development in Micronesia should focus on the following goals: (1) to enhance the capacity of school leaders to confront and reexamine fundamental beliefs, values, and working assumptions about leadership, learning, and teaching; the allocation and use of time; and the role of family and community in helping their children learn; (2) to build school leaders' ability to develop learning communities for all participants in the education system—children, teachers, parents, support staff, administrators, and community and business leaders; (3) to assist education leaders to develop a road map to establish and sustain conditions that will ensure that all children reach school ready to learn, are healthy and safe and achieve at high levels; (4) to assist educational leaders to develop norms and values that will encourage, reinforce, and sustain teaching and learning environments that result in high levels of learning for all children; (5) to assist educational leaders in developing the leadership capacity of others to sustain learning communities where all participants learn at high levels; and (6) to establish a network of educational leaders to share information, develop deeper understanding of unresolved issues, and document lessons that have been learned for solving problems.

Educational improvement takes time and great effort. Ultimately, we learned that effort must be comprehensive, must focus on problems that are authentic in the context of individual schools and local communities, must have committed leadership, must focus on building and improving capacity for change, and must have the commitment of all the players in order to sustain support and hard work for a long period of time.

Perhaps the most significant reflection we have confirmed for ourselves as we moved from planning to implementing educational programs is that, although actions are important, the thinking that influences and shapes what we do is far more critical. Changing our thinking is the first thing we have to do, both individually and collectively, because without that shift we cannot possibly change what we actually do on a day-to-day basis.

We have much to learn, change, and adopt or reject. All is not perfect and equitable in Micronesia. As stated previously, in Micronesia, we can benefit from technical assistance, ideas, model programs, support for local materials development, and more information about quality programs and sound educational practices, with much cross-cultural problem solving. Most importantly, our ability to build capacity among Micronesian school leaders to implement and sustain successful educational practices and quality programs should be the major effort as we rethink education in the Micronesian region. This has been one of the major contributing factors for both the success and failure of our schools in the education of our children. There is much we can learn from our past effort as we contemplate a new shift of paradigm in educational leadership.

We also know that while sometimes we don't carry the banner high enough for quality education for all in Micronesia, we have strengths inherent in our cultures—we care for each other in ways that ensure that no one goes without food, family support, or a roof above their heads. These values of community and caring are integral and can help us put our heads together to rethink education in Micronesia and find better ways to educate our children for the future.

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