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Message From the Director

As this newsletter goes to print, children of families across the Pacific region have been attending their first weeks of the 2014-15 school year. Teachers are hard at work, memorizing names, delivering lesson plans, and brainstorming with their colleagues. As children hop onto school buses, backpacks and supplies in tow, administrators are also hard at work, focusing on budgets and curricula, and welcoming teachers, parents, and students back to school.

In this edition of the REL Pacific newsletter, you'll find success stories about college and career readiness workshops in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and teacher standards in Yap. You'll also read about conferences in Kosrae and Palau, and our roles in these sessions. We share these stories with you not only to keep you apprised of the work we do, but also to acknowledge that we're all in this together. The work of the laboratory is truly collaborative, focused on the singular goal of supporting educators and students across the Pacific. As always, we welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions for future work. And if there's something that you'd like to see featured in a future newsletter, please don't hesitate to let us know. Best wishes to all our friends working toward improving education in the Pacific, and here's to a bright and successful 2014-15 school year.

Nolan Malone

Director, REL Pacific at McREL International

McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds

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2 Collaboration in the CNMI

CNMI Public School System, Northern Marianas College, and the Department of Labor Working Together to Improve Student Outcomes

by Joanne Kelly and Bethany Gleason

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) public school system (PSS), Northern Marianas College (NMC), and the CNMI Department of Labor (DOL) are participating in an unprecedented collaboration to improve student outcomes. In May 2014, staff from the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Pacific at McREL International (McREL) facilitated a workshop on understanding college and career readiness in the CNMI. Representatives from all three organizations attended the session to continue their dialogue on defining and ensuring college and career readiness.

CNMI Secretary of Labor Edith DeLeon Guerrero was one of the participants in this first session. “Our vision is for the CNMI to become a globally recognized workforce that is well educated, trained, and skilled with the character and work ethics needed to foster and sustain a demand-driven and robust economy. An educated citizenry and work-ready community are essential to the CNMI’s long-term economic strength. It is with utmost importance that we continuously expand and strengthen our collective emphasis beyond the minimum benchmarks on education, job training, economic growth, and employment of the CNMI workforce by building and engaging public-private sector partnerships. In this way, everyone wins, and the future and success of the CNMI is premised on our collective commitment.”

The collective commitment of the group shone throughout the meeting as they worked toward creating a data system with indicators that allow for timely intervention, prevent students from falling behind, and improve learning outcomes. Participants engaged in lively discussions about the definition of college and career readiness, with the goal of creating a single definition to be used across organizations, so that

teachers, principals, and researchers across the CNMI can monitor students consistently throughout their K-12 and post-secondary education and into the workforce. Career and Technical Education Director at CNMI PSS, Alfred Ada, remarked, “REL Pacific coordinated this historic collaboration and we have put our great minds together with ‘the end in mind.’ Many definitions for college and career readiness were created that suit the unique CNMI flavor, and one definition was established. We look forward to our next meeting as we engage and move forward in the process of creating and implementing CCR definitions for the CNMI institutions for improved student success.”

REL Pacific is also currently working with PSS and NMC on two research studies focusing on college and career readiness: *College and Career Readiness Among High School Completers in American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands* and *College and Career Readiness Indicators: How Do We Know Our Students are College and Career Ready?* The work to date around the research studies has led to productive collaborative efforts across organizations, and the studies have also resulted in NMC’s continued work to improve data collection and reporting methods to monitor student success.

According to Jacqueline Che, director of Institutional Effectiveness at Northern Marianas College, “We are extremely thrilled about our collaboration with the Public School System (PSS) and the CNMI Department of Labor. This collaborative work to improve transitions through P-20 is long overdue. We look forward to a fruitful partnership with PSS, DOL, and McREL, and to creating effective secondary, post-secondary, and career pathways that maximize the number of skilled people in the CNMI with post-secondary credentials or degrees.”



CNMI Alliance Training at Northern Marianas College

Developing Teacher Standards with the Yap Early Childhood Department of Education

by Joanne Kelly and Wendy Kekahio

Research suggests that high-quality early childhood programs have positive long-term effects on children's academic and social skills (Barnett, 2008). To ensure quality, early childhood programs require a well-educated and qualified workforce that meets standards of performance. Additionally, there is growing recognition that educators of preschoolers need to be better prepared to serve the growing number of culturally diverse children under the age of five, especially those who are dual language learners (Maxwell, Lim, & Early, 2006; Ray, Bowman, & Robbins, 2006).

Yap's Early Childhood Department, led by Coordinator Liyon Sulog, provides a comprehensive range of education services, including management of nine school-based early learning centers located on the main island, Yap, and 16 in the neighboring areas of Gagil-Tomil, Maap, and Rumung. Curriculum is locally developed and instruction is in Yapese. Through funding and support from the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) and the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Pacific, the Yap Early Childhood Department worked with McREL International (McREL) to develop a common set of expectations for early childhood education (ECE) teachers in Yap.

Beginning in 2012, McREL received OIA funding to develop teacher standards for early childhood educators in Yap. Working with input from Yap's advisory committee, comprised of early childhood teachers, administrators, parents, and Board of Education members, McREL helped develop ECE standards for teachers based on the best of current research as reflected in recent standards documents

from leaders in early childhood education, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The resulting set of standards, which include specific indicators and scoring rubrics, was adopted by the Yap Board of Education in August 2013.

Following Yap's adoption of the standards, REL Pacific provided a two-day training to help early childhood educators review and understand the standards and discuss considerations for the roll-out. The training ensured continuous momentum for the standards to be adopted and incorporated throughout the early childhood system.

The Yap Early Childhood Department piloted the standards in February 2014 and gathered baseline data from educators. The Yap Early Childhood Department also received funding for the 2014-15 school year from the OIA to continue implementation of the teacher standards.

As a result of the combined supports of the OIA and REL Pacific, and the partnership between Yap's Early Childhood Department and McREL, teacher standards, rubrics

for evaluation, and performance indicators are now being used by the 52 early childhood educators in Yap. Additionally, data are currently being analyzed in order to understand the kind of future trainings and professional development needed for educators. According to Coordinator Sulog, "I strongly believe that successful programs start with the quality of their classroom teachers and developing the teacher standards for the Yap Early childhood program is a positive step in the right direction. I am confident that our children and families will greatly benefit as a result of this project."

“Our program is really fortunate to have this wonderful opportunity to improve the quality of our teaching staff. I would like to thank McREL & REL Pacific for providing the technical expertise in developing the teacher standards and piloting the first phase of implementation, especially Wendy Kekahio and John Kendall for their tireless efforts working directly with us and the Office of Insular Affairs, which funded this important project.”

Liyon Sulog, Yap Early Childhood Coordinator, Yap State Dept. of Ed.

4 Micronesia Teachers' Education Conference

REL Pacific at the Micronesia Teachers' Education Conference

by Joanne Kelly and Nitara Dandapani

From July 2 to 4, 2014, the 6th annual Micronesian Teachers' Education Conference (MTEC) was held in Kosrae. The theme for this year's conference, which was attended by more than 350 participants, was *Seeing Tomorrow in the Eyes of Every Child: No Good Trees Bear Bad Fruits Nor do Bad Trees Bear Good Fruits*. MTEC is held each year to provide a forum for educators, specifically teachers in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), to convene and share the most effective practices in the field of education. Important topics and discussions included teaching strategies, effective family involvement to increase student achievement, classical behavior reinforcements change, climate change, classroom engagement, Early Learning Grade Assessment (ELGA) in the FSM, assessing literacy and numeracy in more than one language, FSM Response to Intervention Initiative (RTI), and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP).

The REL Pacific team joined the conference to present on REL Pacific's Education Logic Model (ELM) Application and to facilitate a panel on teacher absenteeism. Jean Isip, a consulting manager at REL Pacific at McREL International, commented, "Our hosts in Kosrae graciously welcomed us with delicious dinners and local snacks. It was such a pleasure to interact with attendees and other presenters."

The conference unfolded without a snag at Kosrae High School, despite persistent thunderstorms and a few other unexpected challenges. Although Kosrae Director of Education and REL Pacific Governing Board Member Lyndon Cornelius was not able to attend the conference due to illness, his team pulled together to ensure that the conference was a success, with Mr.

Gibson Mongkeya welcoming and thanking attendees on behalf of the director.

On July 2nd, Dr. Nolan Malone, director of REL Pacific, presented an overview of logic models and demonstrated REL Pacific's Education Logic Model (ELM) application. Developed to support Pacific stakeholders in creating logic models¹, the ELM is a downloadable computer application that guides users through a series of questions, similar to programs like TurboTax®. The end result is a printable logic model that functions as a map, visually connecting intended activities with intended outputs and outcomes.

"We believe that the knowledge your program has shared with all the participants will immensely improve their professional development growth and skills. We know your time is precious and we are grateful that your program has spent time with us during and after MTEC. We look forward to your attendance and participation on next year's Micronesia Teacher Education Conference."

Director Lyndon L. Cornelius,
Kosrae Department of Education

"The term 'logic model' isn't terribly inviting, so it's very satisfying to watch educators move beyond the syntax and get creative in their thinking about how their activities lead to positive student outcomes," commented Dr. Malone.

The presentation was attended by more than 25 conference participants, who provided positive feedback from the experience overall. In the post-event survey, we posed the question to participants, "What aspects of the workshop were most helpful and why?" One respondent offered, "Just the whole concept

itself! I've just about learned a new approach to creating a program that I'd be able to understand and apply."

1 Logic models are visual representations of the assumptions and theory of action that underlie the structure of a program (Lawton, B., Brandon, P.R., Cicchinelli, L., & Kekahio, W. [2014]. Logic models: A tool for designing and monitoring program evaluations. [REL 2014-007]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>).

REL Pacific at the Micronesia Teachers' Education Conference (continued)

As a follow-up to the ELM application, REL Pacific also developed the Program Outcomes, Measures, and Targets (POMT) Application to aid in program monitoring and evaluation (please see page 8 for more information). Both applications can be downloaded free of charge from the REL Pacific website at <http://www.relpacific.mcrel.org/PERR.html>.

Also on July 2, Nitara Dandapani, a research specialist at REL Pacific, facilitated a panel discussion on *"What Drives Teacher Absenteeism? Understanding the Causes and Considering Solutions."* The panel featured Rufino Mauricio, secretary of the FSM National Department of Education, Gardenia Aisek-Macayaon, director of the Chuuk Department of Education, Lorenzo Sartilug, school administrator at the Yap Department of Education, and Wilson Kephias, program administrator at the Kosrae Department of Education.

During their presentations, the panelists spoke about the causes and challenges associated with absenteeism in each of their states, focusing specifically on the role of culture in teacher absenteeism. In particular, cultural observances for funerals can take teachers away from the classroom for one to two weeks at a time. Panelists also discussed the fact that teachers miss school as a result of personal or family members' illness, or drinking and drug abuse problems. Stakeholders in Chuuk are concerned that the absenteeism rate may be under-reported, which raises a need to more closely monitor timesheets and check for accurate reporting. Panelists identified low teacher motivation as another challenge. Solutions explored included providing additional training to build commitment and motivation, or removing unmotivated



Dr. Nolan Malone, director of REL Pacific, giving a presentation on the ELM application.

teachers from the system. Discussion also took place around the current policies used for teacher leave, and how some adjustments to these policies might help address high absence rates.

After the panel discussion, REL Pacific presented research findings on general teacher-level, school-level, and community-level factors that can affect absenteeism. REL Pacific also shared examples of practices or strategies that may help address teacher absence, such as incentives, accountability measures, policy revision, local engagement and relationship-building. The session was attended by teachers, principals, and department of education leadership and staff from all four FSM states. Participants expressed positive feedback about having the opportunity to hear from representatives across the FSM, and to gain insight on common issues that all FSM states face around teacher absenteeism. Interest remains in understanding more about possible solutions to this issue that might fit the context of the FSM.

To wrap up the event, performers shared local dances and songs.

For more information on REL Pacific's presentations at MTEC, please contact us at relpacific@mcrel.org.

6 Palau Education Convention

REL Pacific Presents at the Palau Education Convention

by Joanne Kelly

From July 15 through July 17, more than 500 school personnel, including classroom teachers, counselors, administrators, program heads, and technicians took part in the Palau Education Convention, held in Koror. The theme of the convention, which was held primarily in Palauan, was *Helping Students Succeed*. Presenters included representatives from several ministries on island, as well as two staff members from REL Pacific, Ms. Wendy Kekahio, REL Pacific research director, and Dr. Kay Frunzi, REL Pacific's Palau Research Alliance lead.

“It was just remarkable to be a part of the celebration and perpetuation of Palauan culture through language. Having a convention of this kind in the indigenous language of the host state is very unique, even in the Pacific.”

Ms. Wendy Kekahio



According to REL Pacific Locally Based Consultant Isebong Asang, “The highlight of the convention was the opening remarks portion from President Tommy E. Remengesau, Jr., who announced that the teachers will start the new school year with an increase...to their [salaries].” The increase will also affect the salaries of counselors, principals, and vice principals for the entire public school system. Another highlight of the convention was the award ceremony for teachers of the year, chosen from a pool of candidates nominated by each school.

Conference participants shared best practices, networked, and participated in a variety of professional development sessions. More than 60 sessions were offered, covering a wide range of topics of interest both to educators and other stakeholders. In addition to presentations on education, the Ministry of Justice also provided sessions on victims of abuse, while sessions on health priorities were provided by the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health is an organizational member of the REL Pacific Palau Research Alliance, which also includes members from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor. The research alliance focuses on strengthening teacher effectiveness and optimizing data systems.

Ms. Kekahio delivered a presentation on *Making Sense of Classroom Data*, featuring the IES publication *Five Steps to Structuring Data-Informed Conversations and Action in Education* (Kekahio & Baker, 2013¹). During the presentation, Ms. Kekahio facilitated activities that encouraged participants to identify questions of interest that might be answered using classroom data. The presentation also elaborated upon the different kinds of education data, and how to develop observations and action plans based on that data. Fifteen participants were in attendance, all of whom reported that the information received was both high-quality and beneficial. One participant remarked, “The whole workshop was very helpful because it helps specify how to collect data and how to use it.”

1 Kekahio, W., & Baker, M. (2013). *Five steps for structuring data-informed conversations and action in education* (REL 2013-001). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

REL Pacific Presents at the Palau Education Convention

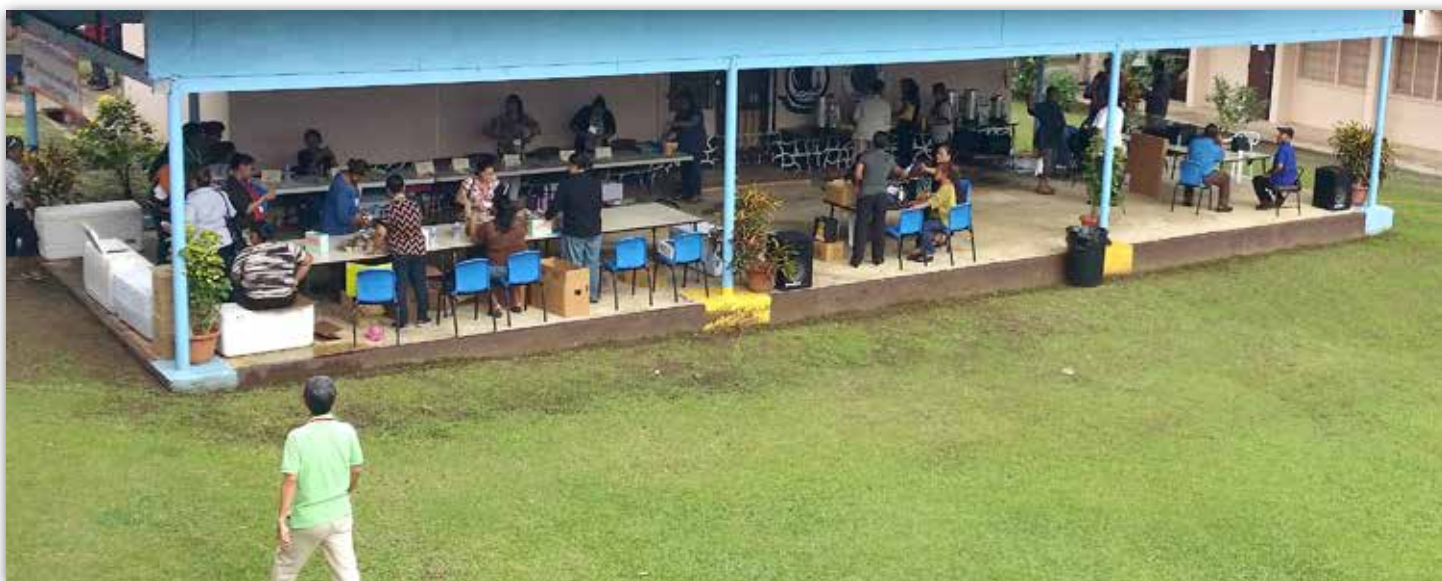
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In addition, an interactive session on *Common Core State Standards: Instructional Shifts for English Language Arts (ELA) Literacy* was delivered by Dr. Kay Frunzi. Participants examined the structure of the Common Core State Standards Initiative and the instructional shifts in English language arts (ELA) that have resulted from implementation of the standards. The presentation also featured *Five Steps to Structuring Data-Informed Conversations and Action in Education* as a model for data-driven decision making for school-wide implementation of ELA Common Core standards. All 21 of the participating teachers and administrators found the connection between research evidence and practical information to be clear. According to Dr. Frunzi, "It was an honor to work with such passionate education professionals who are dedicated to learning in order to better meet the needs of their students. The session participants asked thoughtful questions and were fully engaged in collaborating with their colleagues in the learning process."



Dr. Kay Frunzi with participants at the Palau Education Convention.

Cultural performances were given in the final hours of the event, marking the end of the 20th annual Palau Education Convention. Many thanks to the Organizing Committee for all their efforts in ensuring that the convention was a great success.



Participants signing up at the Palau Education Convention, July 17, 2014.

REL Pacific Releases Programs, Outcomes, Measures & Targets Outcomes App

To assist education stakeholders in the Pacific in program monitoring, the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Pacific, funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), developed the computer application *Program Outcomes, Measures, and Targets* (POMT). The POMT app is free and available for download online at relpacific.mcrel.org/pomt.html. Flash drives are available for education stakeholders in the Pacific who are unable to download the app.

For teachers, administrators, policy makers, and evaluators, program monitoring can be an important method for ensuring that programs run smoothly. Program monitoring can help gauge whether a program has been successful by:

- establishing a detailed and transparent program with measurable outcomes;
- developing clear indicators and measures;
- providing a foundation for data collection and evaluation;
- developing a common language for objective and factual discussion and assessment of progress toward goals.

Why use the POMT app to monitor and measure outcomes of your education program?

The POMT application is a downloadable computer program that runs without an Internet connection on Google Chrome. Users are prompted to enter program information, such as outcomes, indicators, measures, benchmarks, baselines, targets, and progress, to create an interactive dashboard. While monitoring and measuring a program's success is a complex and multi-layered process, the POMT provides a dashboard that is easy to use and convenient to share with fellow colleagues.

For information on the POMT, please contact: **Joanne Kelly, communications consultant, at jkelly@mcrel.org or 808.664.8176.**



National webinar showcases the POMT Application and its uses

On Thursday, August 21st, REL Pacific hosted the *Using the Program Outcomes, Measures, and Targets (POMT) Application to Evaluate Program Effectiveness* webinar. This 90-minute webinar focused on the relationships between the various components of a program monitoring plan; the role of leadership in the planning and assessment of a program; and how the POMT module can help users create an ongoing plan for monitoring, measuring, and tracking outcomes over time to evaluate program effectiveness.

Featured presenters included REL Pacific Director Nolan Malone; coauthor of the POMT quick reference guides and developer of the application, Krishna Narayan; and REL Pacific Project Consultant Fatima Frank.

To view the recorded webinar, please visit the YouTube channel [McRELSPCCO](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMcRELSPCCO).

For more on REL Pacific, please visit relpacific.mcrel.org.

REL Pacific Welcomes New Governing Board Members, Bids Fond Farewell to Former Members

by Kirsten Miller

In June, REL Pacific welcomed two new Governing Board members during a quarterly meeting on the island of Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia: **Hawai'i Senator J. Kalani English** and **Palau Minister of Education Sinton Soalablai**.

“For over a decade, I have been engaged in many issues that affect the REL Pacific region and more so as the Chair of the Senate Transportation and International Affairs committee. Each of the 10 Pacific island entities is unique, but we all share the Pacific Ocean as home and the future of children depends on what we do today. As a state lawmaker, I understand the importance of collaboration. With private and non-profit partnerships working together with government, we can improve the health of our educational systems and solve problems that exist and persist in our regional schools.”



J. Kalani English, Hawai'i Senator

The REL Pacific governing board helps shape the regional agenda of the laboratory and provides a valued understanding of regional priorities and input into REL Pacific's scope of work, bridging research and practice. The dedicated professionals come to the board with broad expertise and in-depth knowledge of Pacific school systems and their needs, and continue to survey the needs of the region to guide ongoing projects. They offer invaluable guidance on how the REL can best advance high-quality data use, research, evaluation, and technical assistance to support improved student learning and outcomes. Board members also encourage collaboration and resource sharing across entities and organizations and disseminate laboratory information, materials, and communications to regional stakeholders.

REL Pacific also bids a fond farewell to four members of the Governing Board in the first half of 2014: **Patrick Tellei**, president of Palau Community College and member of the Pacific Postsecondary Education Council; Senator **Henry Falan**, speaker of the Yap State Legislature; **Jim Arenovski** of Island Training Solutions, recipient of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's 2011 Businessperson of the Year Award; and **Ms. Maridel Perez**, a Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) teacher at Maria A. Ulloa Elementary School in Guam.

10 *Governing Board Transitions*

REL Pacific Welcomes New Governing Board Members, Bids Fond Farewell to Former Members

(continued)

According to Jim Arenovski, "It was a great pleasure to serve as a constituent member of the REL Pacific Governing Board. As a representative of the business community in the CNMI and Guam, I was especially impressed with leaders in education understanding the need for workforce and career development and some of the unique approaches from each area. They know that the future of our islands depends on the quality of the students that graduate from their schools. These people are truly heroes of their islands and I am proud to have served with them."

Maridel Perez noted that "It has truly been a wonderful learning experience to have participated as a constituent member of the REL Pacific Governing Board. The organization has been working diligently to support the enhancement and progress of education in the Pacific Region. Being able to collaborate and exchange ideas with Education Superintendents and Ministers of Education throughout the region reminds us that although we are geographically and culturally diverse, our common goal is to educate ALL our children and prepare them to be successful individuals! With the partnership of the REL Pacific Center for Changing the Odds, we can certainly achieve that!"

"As the newest member of the board, I was grateful for the minutes and materials that were sent to me before the meeting. I was able to get myself acquainted with the updates from the last meeting and preparation for the issues facing my entity as well as other entities. It helped me come prepared to discuss the issues and businesses to be addressed at scheduled meetings, having read the agenda and relevant background materials. Each board member and facilitators were supportive and positive in welcoming me to join them."



S. Soalablai, Minister of Education in Palau

REL Pacific thanks you for your service!



REL Pacific Governing Board Members

Mr. Lyndon Cornelius
Director of Education
Kosrae State Department of Education
Federated States of Micronesia

Mr. Kalani English
Senator
Hawai'i State Senate

Mr. Jon Fernandez
Superintendent
Guam Department of Education

Dr. Salu Hunkin-Finau
Director of Education
American Samoa Department of Education

Dr. Hilda Heine
Minister of Education
Republic of the Marshall Islands

Ms. Gardenia Aisek Macayaon
Director of Education
Chuuk State School System
Federated States of Micronesia

Ms. Kathryn Matayoshi
Superintendent
Hawai'i Department of Education
State of Hawai'i

Dr. Rufino Mauricio
Secretary of Education
FSM Department of Education
Federated States of Micronesia

Mr. Vincent Parren
Director of Education
Yap State Department of Education
Federated States of Micronesia

Dr. Rita Sablan
Commissioner of Education
Public School System
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana
Islands

Mr. Sinton Soalablai
Minister of Education
Republic of Palau

Mr. Joseph Villazon
Director of Education
Pohnpei State Department of Education
Federated States of Micronesia

New REL Pacific Staff

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REL Pacific welcomes two new staff members, April Wilson, researcher, and Spencer Scanlan, research specialist.



April Wilson, Ph.D., was recently hired as a researcher at McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds. April provides research expertise for several projects conducted under the Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Pacific), funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES). She also supplies research support for an IES-funded randomized control trial designed to test the efficacy of a digital math curriculum in West Virginia. April previously served as the director of research for the Texas Association for the Protection of Children, where she provided leadership on how to best prevent, stop, and treat child abuse; she also served on the expert advisory panel for the Home Visiting Data for Performance initiative directed by Pew Charitable Trust. April has worked as a postdoctoral fellow and project manager at the LBJ School of Public Affairs, Center for Health and Social Policy (CHASP) at The University of Texas at Austin; in addition, she served as a research assistant at Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) where she used propensity score matching techniques and predictive analytics to evaluate the impact of after-school programs on educational outcomes for at-risk children across the state of Louisiana. April holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in Human Development and Family Sciences and a B.A. in Psychology from The University of Texas at Austin.



Also joining us this quarter is **Spencer Scanlan**, a research specialist at McREL's Pacific Center for Changing the Odds. Spencer supports regional research studies, technical assistance projects, data analysis requests, and collaboration with REL Pacific research alliances. As a native Pacific Islander, Spencer is committed to improving the education experience for students, teachers, and administrators across the region. At McREL, Spencer uses his vast cultural knowledge and research background to make a difference in the lives of the people of the Pacific region. Before joining McREL, Spencer worked as a research assistant on education research projects in Samoa, India, and for the Fijian Ministry of Education. He has held education research roles throughout the Pacific region since 2009. Spencer holds a B.A. in psychology from Brigham Young University, and an M.Ed. in educational psychology specializing in measurement, statistics, and evaluation from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

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