

Designing High-Quality Professional Learning for the Pacific

REL Pacific is one of ten Regional Educational Laboratories established and funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to develop and use research that improves student outcomes and facilitates a more evidence-based system. We serve education stakeholders in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. We work collaboratively with partnerships of these stakeholders to improve their education systems and outcomes and help them review research, examine data to better understand their existing systems, and identify improvement strategies to reach their goals. Partnerships focus on priority topic areas identified by stakeholders including college and career readiness, professional learning, early literacy, and culturally relevant Pacific education.

The Challenge

In several Pacific jurisdictions, in-service professional learning is a high-leverage need. In many parts of the region, while teachers are required to hold a degree (often an associate degree), these degrees are often unrelated to the content they teach, and they have little to no preservice teacher training.

High-Quality Professional Learning . . .

- **Is tied to specific content and standards** for which teachers are accountable (e.g., math, science, and reading).
- **Incorporates active learning** in which teachers use and practice what they learn rather than simply listening.
- **Is job-embedded**, which means teachers are supported as they work to apply what they learn to their instruction, and they receive feedback on their practice.
- **Is collaborative**—teachers interact, share, and work together.
- **Provides models** so that teachers see examples of things like high-quality lesson plans, student feedback, and teaching exemplars.
- **Includes one-on-one coaching** from more experienced colleagues so teachers have support, based on their needs and interests.
- **Is sustained, continuous**, and provides teachers with sufficient time to learn, practice, apply, and reflect on new strategies.
- **Is aligned with school goals, state/district standards and assessments**, and other professional learning activities.

Sources: Killion & Crow, 2011; Sun, Wilhelm, Larsen, & Franke, 2014.



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- Step 1**
 - Determine what you hope students achieve.
 - What is the goal or outcome desired?
 - What data (including stakeholder input) do you have to make this decision?
- Step 2**
 - What will teachers need to know and be able to do to achieve your goal/outcome?
 - What do teachers already know?
- Step 3**
 - What professional learning already exists in this desired area?
 - Do we need to redesign existing or create new professional learning?
 - What has worked other places?
- Step 4**
 - How does the proposed professional learning fit in with other initiatives?
 - What resources do we have or will we need to support it?
 - What is the best design and the timeline for the professional learning?
- Step 5**
 - How will we provide ongoing support for the professional learning?
 - How will we include coaching and feedback?
 - How will teachers have time to collaborate and get feedback?

Sources: Wei, Darling-Hammond, & Adamson, 2010; Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2016.