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Aloha, Colleagues,

As we prepare to say goodbye to 2018 and look forward to the year ahead, we want to make sure that you know how grateful we are for the opportunity to work together with you, our stakeholders, in service of student outcomes. In this issue of the newsletter, you can read about some of that work in “Where in the World is REL Pacific,” which focuses on recent trips to the RMI and Palau to collaborate with stakeholders on college and career readiness and success and professional learning for teachers.

You’ll also learn more about Typhoon Yutu and its impact on our colleagues in the CNMI, and celebrate with us as we congratulate REL Pacific Board Member Glenn Muña on his appointment as the Commissioner of Education for the CNMI Public School System. Our thoughts are with our friends in the CNMI as they continue to rebuild, and we stand ready to support them in any way that we can. And don’t forget to check out page 4 for the latest resources from the Regional Educational Laboratory System.

From all of us at REL Pacific, here’s wishing you and yours a very happy holiday season and prosperous 2019.

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# After Typhoon Yutu Devastates the Islands, Saipan and Tinian are #marianasStrong

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As leaders of K–12 and college systems from across the Pacific gathered together on Guam on October 24 for the biannual REL Pacific Governing Board meeting, the conversation was overshadowed by the satellite images of an approaching typhoon like none other. With prevailing winds at 180 miles per hour, Super Typhoon Yutu barreled west across the ocean toward the Mariana Islands, an archipelago of 15 islands that includes the U.S. territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

Bracing for the worst—a lesson hard-learned when Super Typhoon Soudelor devastated the Northern Marianas in 2015—CNMI leaders and staff at the board meeting in Guam prepared from a distance with school staff and their families on the island of Saipan 130 miles north.

The eye of Yutu passed directly over Saipan and Tinian overnight, leaving behind evidence of the worst storm that has ever hit these islands or any other location in the United States. More than 3,000 houses were destroyed, roofs and walls torn off, cars and other vehicles tossed around, power poles and trees uprooted and strewn across the island. FEMA, the Red Cross, and other relief organizations partnered with the CNMI government to begin providing basic needs assistance to families across the islands.

Several of REL Pacific’s CNMI partners, including Interim Commissioner of Education Glenn Muña, who were in Guam, were able to travel back to Saipan via a military helicopter as the Saipan airport was too damaged to receive any planes. The leaders quickly got to work—and have been working since—assessing the damages to schools while managing several schools as emergency shelters for those who lost their homes.

On November 7, the CNMI State Board of Education announced that Mr. Muña accepted the official position of Commissioner of Education for the CNMI Public School System (PSS). A week later, PSS released a 10-minute video from the Commissioner updating the public on the relief progress and efforts to get the schools back in session on modified schedules. The overwhelming message: #marianasStrong. Yutu was a worst-case scenario, but the people and islands are resilient and will come back as a stronger community that banded together through this experience.

The REL Pacific team continues to wish our partners at PSS and Northern Marianas College, their families, and the island communities strength and hope through the recovery process. A heartfelt congratulations to the newly appointed Commissioner of Education, who has been a true advocate in the REL Pacific Partnerships for supporting CNMI students in their transitions through the school systems into to college and career pathways.



### Professional Learning Bright Spots in Palau

In November, REL Pacific travelled to Palau to work alongside the Palau Partnership for improving teacher professional learning and classroom practice. Members of Partnerships include stakeholder representatives from K–12, college, government sectors, the workforce, and other community groups.

During the November training session, the Partnership discussed and explored what professional learning pathways currently exist for teachers and what other supports or programs could be developed and implemented to support Palau's cadre of teachers and leaders.

The Partnership identified several bright spots in which the Palau Ministry of Education (MOE) already successfully supports and develops teachers in the region. In addition to discussing these bright spots, REL Pacific staff focused Partnership members in collective inquiry dedicated to identifying and investigating gaps within the current pathways for pre-service and in-service teachers and leaders. The Partnership has requested support from REL Pacific to further investigate and support leaders and teachers in implementing practices at the MOE and school level that will visibly improve teacher knowledge, understandings and practices at the classroom level to positively affect student outcomes.

Moving forward, REL Pacific will continue to work alongside our Palauan partners to a) co-create and construct a Professional Learning (PL) and Development Framework, building on some of their already successful PL practices for developing reflective and responsive educators, and b) develop and engage in job-embedded coaching with a range of MOE staff, including principals, specialist teachers and classroom teachers to model and develop strong practices for giving and receiving feedback, developing high-yield teaching and learning strategies and assisting our partners in embedding highly effective practices for professional learning communities and teacher collaboration.

### Focusing on the Transition From High School to College in the RMI

Iokwe! In November, a REL Pacific team headed to the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) to support stakeholders interested in developing a transition course to help students move from high school into credit-bearing mathematics in college. As is the case in many parts of the world, most high school students in the RMI place into non-credit-bearing math courses when they first enroll in college, which research suggests may contribute to high drop-out rates. To help address this issue, REL Pacific and Carnegie Math Pathway (CMP) teams are supporting leaders and faculty from the Public School System (PSS) and the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI) as they design a math course that will promote students' mathematics learning and engagement.

During REL Pacific's visit to the RMI, the PSS and CMI came together to understand students' mathematics experiences at both the high school and college levels. This collaboration revealed that PSS students must take math courses during all four years of high school, starting with Pre-Algebra in 9th grade and finishing with Algebra 2 in 12th grade. During their senior year, students take a placement exam that places them into one of three non-credit-bearing courses or into one of two credit-bearing courses at CMI. Stakeholders explored how they might better help students place into credit-bearing courses after high school by presenting the transition course as an elective, using the Carnegie Math Pathways approach to restructure Algebra 2 in high school, or restructuring the high school math pathway in a manner that allows for a new math transition course.

Stakeholders also began brainstorming their aims for this work, which will serve to focus their efforts moving forward; team members agreed that they would like to see improvement by the 2020–2021 school year. These aim statements will reflect living, breathing, goals that are continuously altered as more data and information become available. Through these efforts, stakeholders in the RMI will help ensure that more of their students who want a college degree will receive one, and will become successful and contributing members to their communities.

# Check out these Resources From the Regional Educational Laboratories!

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## Instructional Strategies for Teaching Writing to Elementary Students (REL Southeast)

Teaching writing effectively to elementary and secondary students is imperative to helping them improve writing skills, which in turn helps students to be successful both inside and outside of the classroom. Effective writing is a vital component of

literacy development and provides students a means of communicating their thoughts and ideas with others clearly. Writing also provides students with the skills to analyze texts and other information to clarify their own thoughts.

This infographic is available at: [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL\\_SE\\_Instructional\\_Strategies\\_for\\_Teaching\\_Writing\\_to\\_Elementary\\_Students.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/REL_SE_Instructional_Strategies_for_Teaching_Writing_to_Elementary_Students.pdf).

**INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING WRITING TO ELEMENTARY STUDENTS**

"Students who develop strong writing skills at an early age acquire a valuable tool for learning, communication, and self-expression."<sup>1</sup>

**Evidence-based instructional strategies<sup>2</sup>**

- Provide Explicit Instruction**  
Examples: brainstorming/planning, identifying evidence, editing and revising, using Standard English conventions
- Teach Students to Use Various Strategies**  
Examples: acronyms and mnemonic devices, graphic organizers
- Instruction Across Content Areas**  
Examples: mathematics word problems, text-based writing prompts
- Modeling**  
Examples: think-aloud or write-aloud approaches, have students help during the modeling process
- Scaffolded Instruction**  
Examples: work one-on-one or with small groups to identify strengths and weaknesses of writing
- Writing Centers**  
Examples: planning, writing, and revising; collaborative writing

**Reflection Questions**

- "How can I maximize opportunities for writing in my classroom?"
- "Which instructional strategies can I incorporate in my instruction to meet students' individual writing needs?"

**Additional Resources**

- Instructional Considerations for Text-based Writing**  
[https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/Instructional\\_Considerations\\_for\\_Text-based\\_Writing.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/Instructional_Considerations_for_Text-based_Writing.pdf)
- Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers**  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/PractitionerGuide17.pdf>
- Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively**  
<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/PractitionerGuide22.pdf>

**REL SOUTHEAST**  
Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast  
Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia

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<sup>1</sup>Shaker, S., Ballinger, A., Booth, D., Clark, C., D'Neely, C., MacArthur, C., McLaughlin, D., & O'Connell, M. (2012). Teaching secondary school students to be effective writers: A practice guide. IES12-10-0018. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/PractitionerGuide17.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>Stanford, J., Fennell, B., & Smith, K. (2016). Instructional Considerations for Text-based Writing. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/Instructional\\_Considerations\\_for\\_Text-based\\_Writing.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/infographics/pdf/Instructional_Considerations_for_Text-based_Writing.pdf)

## An Improvement Science Approach to Understanding a Problem in your System (REL West)

Uncovering and understanding the causes in the gap between “where you are” and “where you want to be” is a crucial step toward creating an organizational culture of continuous learning and improvement. This infographic illustrates a tenet of improvement science foundational to focusing collective efforts and identifying the right change ideas: determining where you are, where you want to be, and where any gaps exist. It also contains key concepts and tools pertinent to this tenet.

This infographic is available at: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/west/relwestFiles/pdf/FINAL-REL-Improvement-Science-Infographic-508.pdf>.

**An improvement science approach to understanding a problem in your system.**

By taking the time to learn how your system is producing the problem you are trying to solve, you lay the foundation for focusing efforts and identifying the right changes that lead to improvement.

**WHERE YOU ARE** → **WHY DOES THIS GAP EXIST?** → **WHERE YOU WANT TO BE**

**Uncover and Examine the Causes**

- What are the causes of the problem? What's your evidence?
- Which causes are high-leverage areas to work on?

**Collectively make sense of data about the problem**

- What is the extent of the problem?
- How does the problem vary over time?
- Across sites? Between groups?

Related tools/strategies

- Focus on variation: Pareto charts, run charts
- Gather data about possible causes

**Map the system**

- What is the system that is producing the problem?
- Where are the breakdowns happening?

Related tools/strategies

- Process map
- System map

**Understand the user experience**

- How do users experience the system?
- Where do users identify system breakdowns?

Related tools/strategies

- Empathy interviews and journey maps
- Shadowing

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Regional Educational Laboratory West  
California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington

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