



December 2017, vol.2

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Dear Colleagues,

As 2017 comes to a close, we find ourselves reflecting on the busy and productive year we've had at REL Pacific. In addition to getting our first year's workplan approved, we've presented at a number of conferences, including the Micronesian Teachers Education Conference and the Pacific Education Conference; met with our Governing Board members; and begun working with our Partnerships throughout the region. Additionally, we've joined our partners at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching to deliver Improvement Science Explorers' Workshops in Pohnpei, Palau, and Guam and are looking forward to bringing these sessions to the rest of the region in early 2018.

In this issue of our newsletter, we'll introduce you to our four new staff members, share more about what we're doing around the region, and update you on our most recent Governing Board meeting. As always, we would be happy to hear about your work, your accomplishments, and your needs. Please feel free to contact me at 808.664.8187, or by email at [pherman@mcrel.org](mailto:pherman@mcrel.org). We hope you all have had a great year and we look forward to continuing our work together in the coming year.

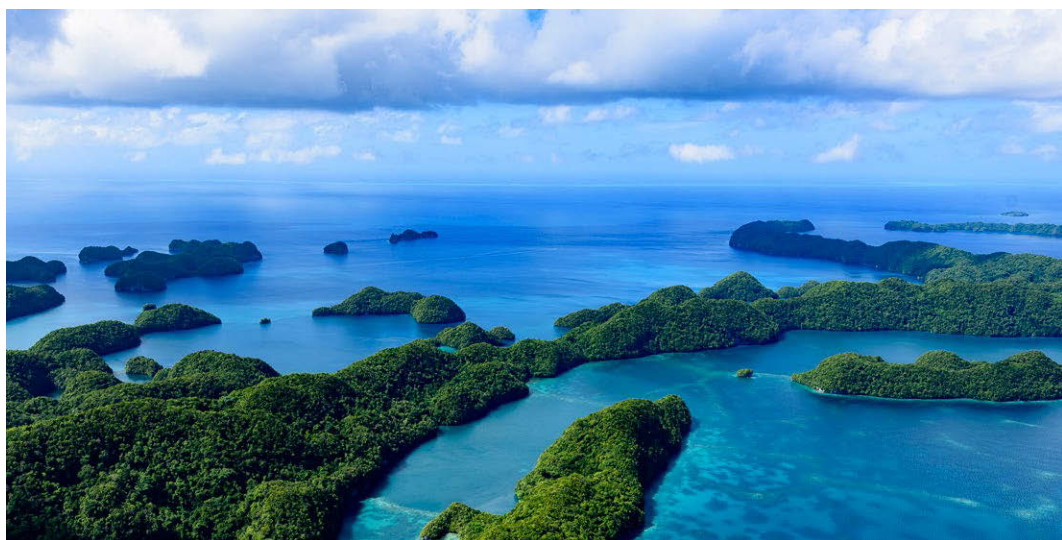
Phillip Herman  
Director, REL Pacific at McREL International

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## <sup>2</sup> REL Pacific Governing Board Meets in Honolulu

On October 4–6, the REL Pacific Governing Board met in Honolulu, Hawaii for its second meeting of the 2017–2022 REL contract cycle. This three-day meeting brought together board members and REL Pacific staff to provide an in-depth look at recent research developments in the field of professional learning and college and career readiness and to discuss potential REL Pacific training, coaching, and technical support projects related to these two high-priority areas.

REL Pacific Director Dr. Phillip Herman provided an overview of the types of collaboration that REL Pacific can offer to the Partnerships on professional learning, especially regarding preservice and in-service teachers and principals, stressing the distinction between what we normally call “professional development” and the systematic and routine process of “professional learning,” which is intended to result in system-wide changes in student outcomes. Highlights of the college and career readiness conversations centered around the gap in expectations between high school graduation and college entrance, the role of career and technical education, and workforce expectations.

REL Pacific staff also discussed recent REL Pacific studies on college readiness conducted in the Northern Mariana Islands during the 2012–2017 contract cycle—*Comparing Enrollment, Characteristics, and Academic Outcomes of Students in Developmental Courses and Those in Credit-bearing Courses at Northern Marianas College*, and *Using High School Data to Understand College Readiness in the Northern Mariana Islands*—in order to illustrate the kind of studies that REL Pacific can conduct within the jurisdictions. During the current contract cycle, the studies that REL Pacific will propose in collaboration with the Partnerships are designed to provide information to help Partnerships identify the best methods for improving processes in their education systems.

REL Pacific and the Board were also joined by staff from the Carnegie Foundation for the Improvement of Teaching, who provided an overview of improvement

science, a method of continuous improvement that relies on the following six principles and which underlies REL Pacific’s approach to its work during the 2017–2022 contract cycle.

1. Make the work problem-specific and user-centered.
2. Variation in performance is the core problem to address.
3. See the system that produces the current outcomes.
4. We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure.
5. Anchor practice improvement in disciplined inquiry.
6. Accelerate improvements through networked communities.

Source: <https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/our-ideas/six-core-principles-improvement/>

Special guest Dr. Manulani Aluli-Meyer, a new member of REL Pacific’s Technical Working Group, also attended the meeting and spoke about her work in indigenous epistemology and working within the American education system when indigenous models of education may be more appropriate to teach in Pacific Island contexts. Board members then discussed how their jurisdictions can individualize the upcoming REL Pacific work and apply culturally relevant models of education to help students move from K–12 to college and career while working within inherited formal education systems.

The Board also had the opportunity to connect with REL Pacific’s Contracting Officer Representative, Janelle Sands, via Skype. Ms. Sands discussed the goals of the REL program for the current cycle, explained how the current cycle (2017–2022) differ from the past REL contract (2012–2017), and outlined how IES thinks about defining the success of the laboratory program in general and for REL Pacific specifically.

Although the meeting focused primarily on two of REL Pacific’s four priority areas for the current contract

## REL Pacific Governing Board Meets in Honolulu (cont.) <sup>3</sup>

cycle, participants also learned about how each priority area intersects, with all four priorities connected to the first: preparing students for college, career, and life.

1. Helping students to be ready for what happens after high school, and increasing the number of students who have real choices (college and career readiness). This includes skill development for a particular job, as well as work ethic, motivation, and other social-emotional skills.
2. Developing a culture of professional learning that works to meet specific and real goals. This includes identifying what effective professional learning looks like for the teachers in each jurisdiction and in each particular system's context. Effective professional learning not only translates into better teaching, but can also be effective in retaining and recruiting teachers.
3. Supporting students in the early years (K–3) so that they are literate in one or more languages by 3rd grade. Literacy efforts will be different depending on the needs of each jurisdiction, but 3rd grade is a target because research shows it to be a turning point for students' literacy experiences.
4. Leveraging jurisdictions' own cultures and changing teaching and curriculum so that access to knowledge in school and culture go together, which is consistent with the way both students and teachers learn in the indigenous cultural context. Although reading and learning about other places is important, access to materials for students to learn about their own culture and surrounding Pacific cultures and histories is equally important.

Board members also had the opportunity to discuss the proposed collaborative work for each jurisdiction with REL staff members, and discussed scheduling of upcoming training and coaching sessions throughout the region.

In addition, Board members elected Yap Director of Education Teresa Filepin to act as the next REL Pacific Governing Board Chair. Ms. Filepin will assume the duties of the chair in 2018 and will preside over the next REL Pacific Governing Board meeting, tentatively scheduled for March 21–22, 2018 in Honolulu.



**REL Pacific Board members and staff at the October 2017 Governing Board meeting in Honolulu.**

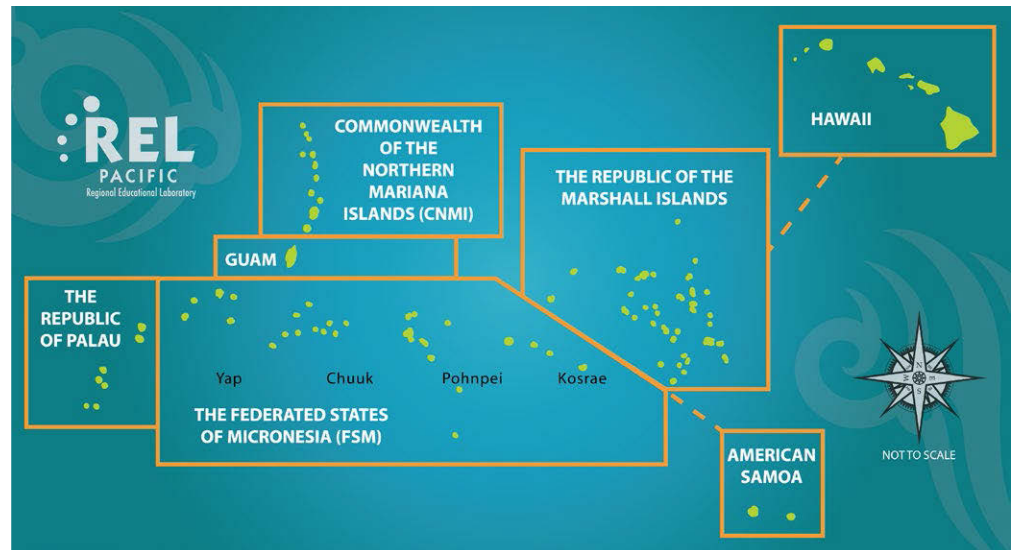
### <sup>4</sup> Collaborating on College, Careers, and Teaching Across the Region

For students to have opportunities to learn, they need access to effective teachers—and effective teachers need access to their own high-quality learning experiences to hone their crafts. When students are instructed by these high-quality teachers and have the opportunity to learn, they also have access and exposure to facets of schooling that will support college and readiness and success. These two interrelated areas—college and career readiness and success and teacher professional learning—continue to be focus areas for REL Pacific’s work in and support of stakeholders across the Pacific region.

REL Pacific staff recently traveled to the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Kosrae, and Chuuk to facilitate training and coaching sessions around these important priority areas. During each college and career readiness session, REL Pacific staff discussed REL Pacific’s collaboration with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Research Alliance which, in the previous REL contract cycle (2012–2017), produced descriptive research studies on predictors of development course enrollment and other indicators of student success in the high school to college transition (see Resources section on page 6 for links to the studies!).

#### REL Pacific in the RMI

The first college and career readiness and success Partnership meeting of the 2017–2022 contract cycle was held on Oct. 25 during REL Pacific’s week-long visit to the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). This meeting was hosted by the RMI Ministry of Education, and included representatives from both public and private K–12 systems, the College of the Marshall Islands (CMI), and the new University of the South Pacific (USP) campus in Majuro. New members of



the RMI CCORS Partnership learned about and began discussions on ways to better align K–12 and college systems in the RMI context.

After discussing the studies, participants talked about the ways in which the RMI is similar to and differs from the CNMI context, and teachers provided examples from their own classrooms that could inform a potential Partnership-driven study.

Meeting participants were unanimous that the time spent talking about these issues was not enough for the initial meeting, so REL Pacific encouraged the Partnership members to continue talking before the next REL-facilitated meeting, to be held in early 2018. The Marshall Islands High School (MIHS) leadership team, including the vice principal and department heads, continued the conversation the very next day by holding a debrief meeting with their principal and other teachers at the high school. REL Pacific staff also visited several stakeholders at their campuses to make new connections with potential Partnership members, including at the Ministry of Education, the CMI Institutional Research and CMI Marshallese Studies departments, MIHS, and Assumption Catholic School.

#### REL Pacific in Kosrae

On November 1–2, REL Pacific staff met with nearly forty stakeholders representing the K–12, college, and workforce sections in Kosrae for two coaching and

## Collaborating on College, Careers, and Teaching Across the Region (cont.) <sup>5</sup>

training meetings on the topics of college and career readiness and success and professional learning.

During the session on college and career readiness and success, participants identified gaps between K–12 and college/workforce alignment in their present systems. Some identified gaps included lack of curricular alignment between high school and college, a need for more attention on technical/vocational skills, and the need to focus on adolescents' soft skills (sometimes referred to as executive functions).

The second session, on professional learning, focused on attributes of high-quality professional learning; for example, that learning should be long-term, student-centered, and continuous. Participants compared some of their own professional learning experiences to the attributes, and began to consider how they might design or redesign professional learning offerings for their teachers.

The REL Pacific team will return to Kosrae in early 2018 to offer additional coaching and training sessions to support Partnership members as they continue to develop goals for their Partnerships and work toward ensuring that all students in Kosrae have access to high-quality teachers and are prepared for college and careers.

### **REL Pacific in Chuuk**

On November 14–15, REL Pacific staff traveled to Weno, Chuuk to begin a series of coaching sessions with two Chuuk State partnerships in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM): the Partnership for College and Career Readiness and Success (CCR) and the Partnership for the Improvement of Teaching. Hosted by the Chuuk Department of Education (CDOE), each one-day Partnership meeting engaged nearly 20 participants in collaborative study, reflection, and work. Participants included representatives from the Chuuk Department of Education; Chuuk schools; the College of Micronesia-FSM (COM-FSM) Chuuk campus; the Caroline College and Pastoral Institute (an outreach college of Chaminade University); and the Chuuk Chamber of Commerce.

Partnership members worked collaboratively each day toward multiple objectives related to improving CCR and professional learning, including developing a local definition of college and career readiness, reflecting on their own experiences to identify characteristics of high-quality professional learning, and beginning to frame and develop goals for their Partnerships.

The work of CCR Partnership members focused on several key questions, including, “Why do collaboration and alignment among K–12, colleges, and the workforce matter?” Participants shared insights and anecdotes, noting, for example, that local businesses need to provide extensive training for high school graduates new to the workforce, and discussing whether or not the existing curriculum adequately prepares students for college. REL Pacific also facilitated a collaborative process in which the Partnership built a local definition of college and career readiness in Chuuk, developing associated goals in five key areas: financial awareness, career awareness, service alignment and monitoring, college and life readiness, and cultural awareness.

During the Partnership for the Improvement of Teaching session, participants reflected on and discussed their individual and collective experiences with high-quality professional learning, and worked to identify aspects that made these experiences effective within the Chuukese context. This facilitated discussion and reflection resulted in the identification of several key themes that captured elements that Partnership members felt high-quality professional learning in Chuuk should include: collaboration, content relevant to one's work, grounded in a vision, provides resources for use, is contextualized for Chuuk, and occurs in a location that allows participants to focus on learning—characteristics that all align to current research on high-quality professional learning.

Identified next steps include recruiting more school and college faculty and workforce representatives to participate, and developing a calendar/timeline to facilitate planning for future meetings and tasks.

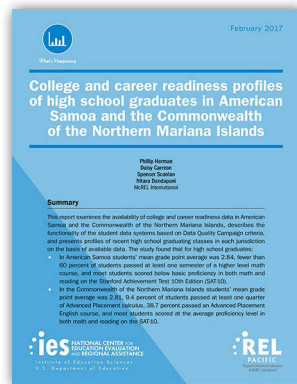
## Learn More About the Regional Educational Laboratory Program!

REL Pacific is one of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories established and funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. The laboratories work with partnerships and alliances within their respective regions to develop research and provide training and coaching to support evidence-based education outcomes. The REL Pacific region encompasses approximately 4.9 million square miles and serves 10 Pacific island entities, including 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. REL Pacific is housed at McREL International's Honolulu office. To learn more about REL Pacific, and the nine other labs in Regional Educational Laboratory Program, visit <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/>.

## Check Out These Recent Reports From REL Pacific!

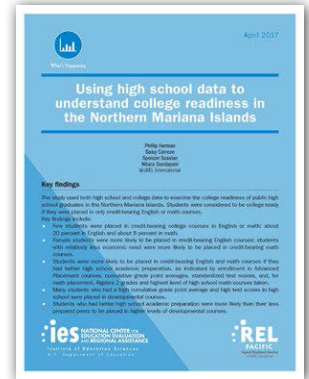
### *College and Career Readiness Profiles of High School Graduates in American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*

This report examines the availability of college and career readiness data in American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, describes the functionality of the student data systems based on Data Quality Campaign criteria, and presents profiles of recent high school graduating classes in each jurisdiction. Check out the full report at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?projectID=398>.



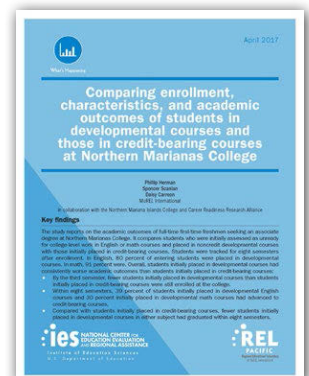
## Using High School Data to Understand College Readiness in the Northern Mariana Islands

This report examines the college readiness of public high school graduates in the Northern Mariana Islands, as measured by whether the graduates were placed in developmental college courses or credit-bearing college courses at Northern Marianas College. The study examined the high school records of recent graduates of the public school system in the Northern Mariana Islands who entered Northern Marianas College from fall semester 2010 through spring semester 2014. Demographic information was available about students' gender, ethnicity, primary language spoken at home, and economic need (based on whether or not students received Pell grants). Learn more by downloading the full report at <https://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=REL2017268>.



### *Comparing Enrollment, Characteristics, and Academic Outcomes of Students in Developmental Courses and Those in Credit-bearing Courses at Northern Marianas College*

This study reports on the academic outcomes of full-time, first-time freshman studying for their associate degrees who entered Northern Marianas College from fall semester 2008 through fall semester 2010. The study examines outcomes for students who enrolled in developmental courses (80 percent of students in English and 91 percent in math) and students who enrolled only in credit-bearing courses. Students were tracked for eight semesters after their first year in college. For more information and results, read the full report at <https://ies.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=REL2017269>.



REL Pacific has welcomed several new faces to our team in recent months. If you haven't already, we hope you get a chance to meet them in person soon!

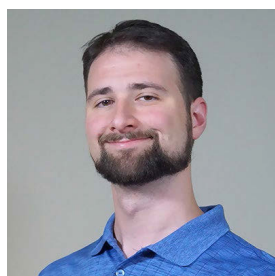
## Dale Lewis • Deputy Director



As REL Pacific deputy director, Dr. Dale Lewis provides leadership and oversight on the REL Pacific scope of work, including training and coaching, and publications. Prior to his role as deputy director, Dale provided strategic vision,

direction, and leadership in developing, planning, and implementing solutions in K–12 education for McREL International. Dale holds a M.Ed. in special education and a doctorate in education–school improvement from Texas State University.

## Max Altman • Research Associate



Dr. Max Altman provides research and consultation support for a variety of projects under the REL Pacific contract, primarily in the areas of early literacy and college and career readiness and success, including K–12 and

higher education alignment; postsecondary access and success; and the role of cognitive and non-cognitive factors in postsecondary readiness. Prior to joining REL Pacific, Max held research roles at the Center for Education Design, Evaluation, and Research (CEDER), focusing on STEM education, and the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, working on education and transitional justice. Max holds a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Policy from the University of Michigan and a B.S. in Secondary Education/Mathematics from Vanderbilt University.

## Katie Gao • Communications Specialist



Dr. Katie Gao supports REL Pacific in both research and dissemination through content creation, design, and quality assurance on various REL projects. She has worked on production teams for both news-based and academic

publications, and most recently as a publication designer for Ne'epapa Ka Hana, a culturally responsive mathematics curriculum for Hawai'i middle schools. Katie's research focus is on aspects of language use in multilingual populations. Katie holds a Ph.D. and M.A. in Linguistics from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and a B.A. in Mass Communication from the University of Central Arkansas.

## Lisa Scherff • Managing Researcher



As a managing researcher, Dr. Lisa Scherff leads training and coaching sessions throughout the Pacific region and conducts research on teacher development. Her expertise is in the areas of teacher preparation and

development, adolescent literacy, and opportunity to learn. Prior to joining REL Pacific, Lisa was a classroom teacher in Florida and a teacher educator at the University of Tennessee, the University of Alabama, and Florida State University. Lisa holds a Ph.D. in Reading Education and a Graduate Certificate in Educational Policy from Florida State University, and an M.A. in English from the University of Mississippi.

## Contributors:

Dale Lewis - deputy director

Kirsten Miller - communications manager

Judy Counley - new media developer

Lisa Scherff - managing researcher

Katie Gao - communications specialist



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**REL Pacific**

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