

REL Pacific Newsletter

June 2023, vol. 6



From the Director

Dear Colleagues,

Happy summer! With the graduation season upon us, REL Pacific would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of the graduates of 2023. We would also like to acknowledge all educators, students, and parents and caregivers for the successful completion of another school year. Congratulations on a job well done!

And while some teachers and administrators may feel energized and ready to celebrate the long break, we also recognize that many of you may be feeling exhausted from all the successes and challenges you faced this past year. We are here to support all of you with improving and potentially shaping and refining things to make them even better next year. With that in mind, REL Pacific is happy to embark on our summer professional learning sessions for teachers and administrators. For example, we'll have staff facilitating sessions in Pohnpei, Kosrae, and Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) over the next several months.

We are also pleased to announce in this newsletter that three of our team members have officially taken on new roles at REL Pacific. Read more to see our staffing updates and to find out how these familiar faces are more than happy to support your regional, national, or local efforts.

Finally, we want to acknowledge that our friends, partners, and colleagues in Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) are continuing to recover from Typhoon Mawar and assessing its impact on summer and fall schooling plans. Our staff member, Mark Yu, who lives on Guam, has shared that he and his family are doing OK, with a few scrapes from cleaning up debris and headaches from the heat, however, their spirits remain high. Despite experiencing a lack of power, water, and internet in their

village, as well as heavy damage to property and cars due to substantial flooding, Mark said it's been such an eye-opening experience to see the strength of culture and cooperation in Guam, and he's never felt more connected to his community. REL Pacific is here to support our colleagues and friends in Guam and CNMI as much as we can through this difficult time. Our thoughts are with you and your families!

Please don't hesitate to reach out with questions, concerns, or requests for assistance at relpacific@mcrel.org.

Best regards,

Christina Tydeman
REL Pacific Director

New and Upcoming from REL Pacific



Palau Partnership Working to Strengthen Teacher Workforce

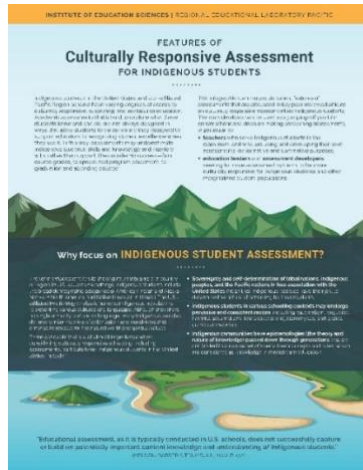
In this blog post, REL Pacific staff member Sinton Soalablai, the former Minister of Education in the Republic of Palau, discusses the [Palau Partnership to Support Teacher Effectiveness](#), which is focused on the high-leverage need of teacher training and retention. Dr. Soalablai explains how, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Palau Community College, and local private schools, REL Pacific is assisting private schools in their effort to link their school improvement planning and teacher professional development planning, as well as providing training and coaching on using Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles to enact system change.

[Read the Post](#)

What's Happening in the Hawai'i Partnership?

As we transition from the end of the school year into summer, the [Hui for All to Benefit from Hawaiian Education](#) is wrapping up some work and gearing up for next year. From October 2022 to May 2023, REL Pacific worked with a group of educators from four public charter schools on Hawai'i island and Maui on an eight-module professional learning series on the design of performance assessments, with a particular focus on the cultural contexts of charter schools in Hawai'i. Another set of charter school educators and leaders on O'ahu and Kaua'i spent this year with REL Pacific establishing a networked improvement community (NIC) focused on promoting culture-based meaningful assessments. After developing a working theory of improvement for the NIC, the group has recently progressed into their action-research phase to begin formulating research questions that they'll investigate in Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles this coming school year.

As part of its work, the Hui is focused on building broader community awareness of culturally relevant and sustaining instruction and assessment practices that take place in the classroom and at the system level. Check out and share these two new resources from REL Pacific and the Hui!



Infographic: Features of Culturally Responsive Assessment for Indigenous Students

Indigenous students in the Pacific Region and across the United States have varying degrees of access to culturally responsive and sustaining education. Commonly used academic assessments are not always designed in ways that allow Indigenous students to fully show their knowledge and skills, nor are they designed to support educators in recognizing student excellence when they see it. This infographic summarizes six features of culturally responsive assessments and provides educators with considerations that can be used as a jumping-off point for conversations and decision making concerning assessments.

[Infographic](#)



Webinar: Assessment Systems in Indigenous Contexts

Research shows that Indigenous students benefit from culturally responsive and sustaining education, but assessment is not always at the forefront of conversations. In this recorded webinar from this spring, panelists share their experiences and considerations working at different levels of the education system for moving toward assessment systems that better support and highlight the skills and knowledge of Indigenous students.

[Watch the Webinar](#)

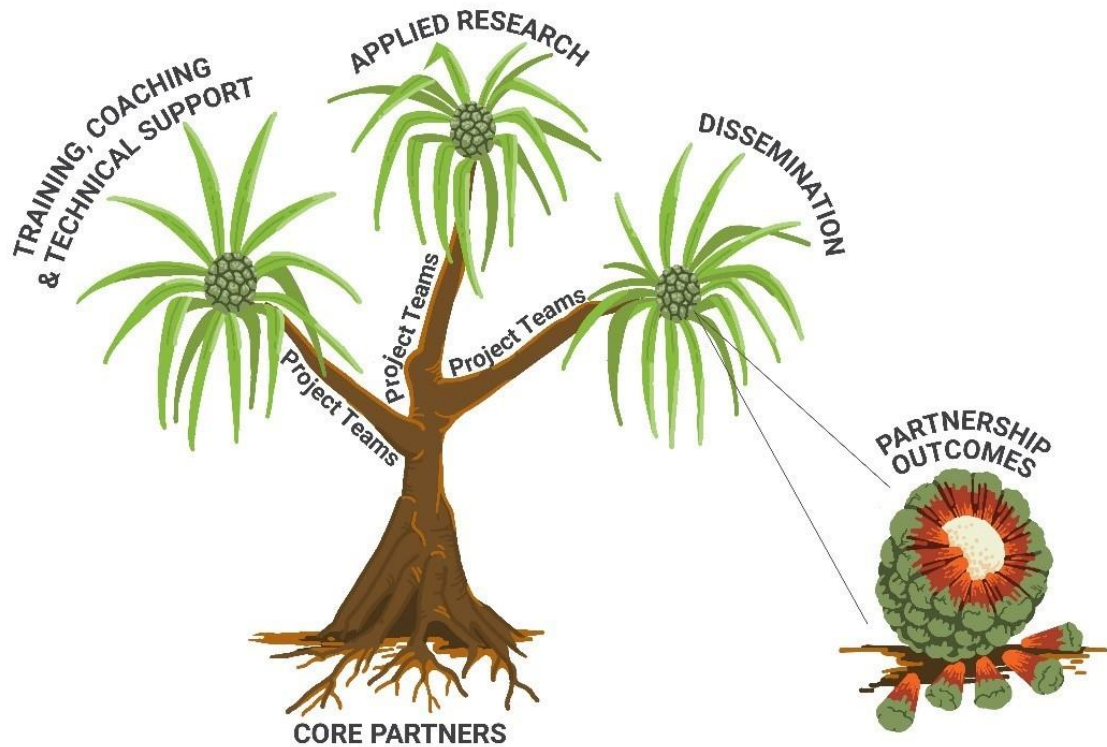


Carnegie Summit on Improvement in Education

Photo, from left to right: Chelsea Keehne (Kamehameha Schools), Ben Cronkright (REL Pacific), Meahilahila Kelling (Ke Kula 'o Samuel M. Kamakau Laboratory Public Charter School), and Denise Espania (Mālama Honua Public Charter School) presented a poster session at the 2023 Carnegie Summit in San Diego. The session, titled “Āina-based and Place-based Education in Hawai‘i Schools: Charting a NIC’s Journey to Equitable Practice,” introduced the Hui’s networked improvement community goals and process of exploring and developing culturally relevant instruction and assessment tools.

Contextualizing Education Partnerships in the Pacific Region: An Example from the Federated States of Micronesia

REL PACIFIC PARTNERSHIPS



In this recent [blog post](#), REL Pacific staff explain the concept and structure of REL partnerships, metaphorically illustrated with a pandanus tree—a native tree that grows throughout the Pacific region and that holds cultural significance for many communities.

- Core partners as the roots of REL Pacific partnerships: The core partners are a small group of system leaders and key stakeholders, along with a REL Pacific partnership lead, who advise, inform, and provide direction for the partnership.
- Project teams as the branches: The project teams are the educators, leaders, and staff who work to design and implement the projects.
- Leaf clusters as project types: The REL provides three types of services: (1) training, coaching, and technical support projects, (2) applied research projects, and (3) dissemination products and events.
- The fruit as the partnership outcomes: All of the partnership's efforts are designed to address high-leverage needs and produce desired outcomes that benefit students and educators.

The authors then discuss the [FSM Partnership to Improve Teacher Effectiveness by Developing and Implementing an Evidence-Based, Culturally Responsive Model for Instruction](#) as an example of how a partnership focuses on improving academic outcomes through building teacher capacity, supporting schools to meet accreditation standards, and bridging the gap between the languages students use in and outside of the classroom.

[Blog Post](#)

Upcoming REL Pacific Sessions in the FSM

- Kosrae, June 26–30: Planning for and Implementing Systemic Change in the Kosrae Department of Education
- Pohnpei, July 10–14: Planning for and Implementing Systemic Change in the Pohnpei Department of Education
- Yap, July 12–14 and 17–18: Supporting the Development of a New Culture Curriculum
- Pohnpei, September 20–22: Piloting a Culturally Sustaining Instructional Model (Coaching Session 1)
- Pohnpei, October/November: REL Pacific Governing Board Meeting at the College of Micronesia-FSM
- Pohnpei, November 15–17: Piloting a Culturally Sustaining Instructional Model (Coaching Session 2)

REL Pacific Governing Board Spring Meeting

The REL Pacific Governing Board held an online meeting on April 20. Board members from across the region were joined by REL Pacific staff and IES representatives to share and hear updates about the ongoing work across the region, including development of a multimedia educator toolkit on teaching secondary students to write effectively, a community of practice that is exploring school data culture in the Pacific context, and two new partnerships in development with the Republic of the Marshall Islands and American Samoa. Board members also discussed ideas for supporting regular and meaningful engagement with parents and librarians. Lastly, governing board members selected Dr. Evile Feleti of American Samoa Community College as the new REL Pacific Governing Board chairperson and began planning for the fall governing board meeting to be held in October/November.

Meet Our Staff

As in our previous newsletters, we're continuing to update you on our REL Pacific staff members, all of whom are committed to supporting and serving you as you tackle your problems of practice. In this issue, three familiar staff are taking on new roles as of this spring.



Dr. Marisa Crowder

Dr. Marisa Crowder is now REL Pacific's partnerships lead, managing communications, collaborative activities, and meetings with key partners and system leaders across the region. Dr. Crowder is also leading the Cross-REL Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy Working Group, which publishes resources on culturally sustaining pedagogy, and she also is leading the development of the new partnership with the Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Education, Public School System, and College of the Marshall Islands.

Dr. Erin A. Chaparro

Dr. Erin A. Chaparro is our new applied research lead, working in partnership with stakeholders to conduct applied research and serving as a lead principal investigator for REL Pacific studies. Additionally, Dr. Chaparro is co-leading the cross-region Contextualizing Pacific Data Culture Community of Practice, a group of K–12 and higher education stakeholders from the region who are meeting monthly to explore and discuss the use of data for school improvement decision making.



Dr. Katie Gao

Dr. Katie Gao is the new dissemination lead, managing REL Pacific's publication of partnership communication products, such as infographics, fact sheets, videos, webinars, and conferences. Dr. Gao previously served as the REL Pacific partnerships lead, and she has recently assumed the role as the partnership lead for REL Pacific's work in Hawai'i with the Hui for All to Benefit from Hawaiian Education.

Keep an eye out for our next newsletter to meet more of our staff!

New Resources from the U.S. Department of Education

What Works Clearinghouse Reading Intervention Practice Guide

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) recently released a [practice guide](#) that provides four evidence-based recommendations that teachers in grades 4–9 can use to apply reading interventions to meet their students' needs.

U.S. Department of Education Guiding Principles

[Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates](#) includes specific recommendations for evidence-based practices that provide students with what they need to learn and grow. This resource identifies five guiding principles and actions that schools and districts can follow to create safe, inclusive, supportive, and fair school environments.

Middle School Math Engagement

This new [30-minute documentary](#) produced by REL Midwest highlights the importance of engaging middle school students in math learning. In this video, instructional experts discuss research on effective and evidence-based strategies for math instruction and student engagement.

REL Pacific Resources



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Follow @RELPacific on Twitter to stay up to date on our current work and exciting events!

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Products

Check out REL Pacific's products page on the new IES website! Click to see our research studies, blogs, and infographics!

[Read More](#)



Research Tools

Looking for relevant, actionable research tools? Click the link below for a variety of resources across 24 topic areas!

[Explore More](#)

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