

Archived Information

Interim Evaluation of the Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

I. Brief Overview of Laboratory

The Interim Evaluation of Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) took place during the week of May 17, 1999.

PREL began operation as a Regional Education Laboratory (REL) in 1985. At that time, the Northwest Regional Lab, which had previously held the contract for the region, served as fiscal agent. Its Governing Board was the Board which hired the CEO of PREL, John Kofel; PREL's own Board, according to Kofel (5/18) was a program/policy board. During that first contract period, PREL took over its own management; its Board became a governing board. Comprised of ten Chief State School Officers and ten constituent members from across the region, the PREL Board nominates the replacements for retiring constituent members. PREL was awarded a contract on its own for the five-year periods beginning in 1990 and 1995. During this period, PREL has become a major factor in education policy-making in the region and has become the translator for the region in Washington. It has gained the trust of the region's political leadership. One Board member stated that PREL is about hope in the region, that PREL plays the roles of bridge and buffer as the region struggles for maintaining identity while at the same time developing.

PREL's service area is the most diverse of any of the REL's. It comprises one state, Hawaii; two territories, Guam and American Samoa; one commonwealth, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands (CNMI); and three independent, "freely associated" nations, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI). Geographically, this region is substantially larger than the continental United States. It spans six time zones and crosses the International Date Line. It includes entities in

which teacher preparation ranges from a high school diploma to an AA (in any field including ones such as cosmetology) to a university education to full teacher training. The population of its entities ranges from 6,000 to several hundred thousand; the linguistic diversity is also great ranging from one primary language to several substantially different primary languages in a given entity. PREL's region includes entities with trained administrators and entities in which the principal may be the person who owns the land on which the school is situated. It includes entities with no institutions of higher education, with two-year colleges, and with a few, but not many four-year and graduate universities.

The PREL office is located in Honolulu, HI; satellite Service Centers are presently located in Hagatna, Guam; Saipan, CNMI; Colonia, Yap, FSM; and Pago Pago, American Samoa. These Service Centers serve PREL not only as arms of the REL, but also as arms of PREL's other services.

If PREL were to be described with one word, that word would be **dynamic**. In every sense of the word, PREL is dynamic. It radiates energy, it creates connections between other bodies, and both what it does and how it does it are constantly evolving. As PREL has been working to develop the capacity of its entities, it has been developing its own capacity at a rapid pace. The various aspects of this evolution do not always develop at the same pace. In particular, documentation of PREL's own work seems to have proceeded at a far slower pace than its other activities. As a consequence, PREL's functioning can seem different depending upon the lens through which one is viewing the organization. The same question can have different answers depending upon the lens or alternatively, viewing an issue through a new lens can change the answer to the question posed. This is true particularly when one of the lenses is documentation.

II. Implementation and Management

A. To what extent is PREL doing what they were approved to do during its first three contract years?

In general, PREL has addressed and is addressing each of the Tasks in the manner it has agreed to. As documented in the Quarterly Reports, PREL is conscious of its obligations and responsibilities in each area and addresses each both in its planning and in its activities. Some of the issues discussed in the contract proposal merit further discussion.

The PREL Governing Board is representative of the entire region. It not only reflects the diversity of the region in its composition, but it also operationally strikes a balance between the efficiency of operation necessitated by budget and time considerations and the seemingly (to Western eyes) unstructured process customary in many of the entities. The PREL leadership understands the culture of the Pacific Region. As a result, it has been able to work with the Board to help it function as a setter of priorities for the entire region, not just as a group of advocates for individual constituencies.

In addition, PREL leadership's own actions often reflect the values and mores of the region. Nowhere is this more obvious than in descriptions of the actions of the Board. PREL describes its Board as being proactive in nature, but there is little written evidence that that is the case. Rather, an examination of documents makes it seem that the Board functions primarily in a reactive manner. Other than mentioning the opportunity to contribute agenda items, Board members interviewed did not provide examples of proactive opportunities provided to the Board. Furthermore, they provided no examples of proactive activities on the part of the Board. However, in discussing PREL activities, staff repeatedly comments that "the Board wants...." The OERI program officer commented that the Board has changed from a passive acceptor to an active initiator. Taken together, these comments would indicate that the proactive nature

ascribed to the Board is, in fact, accurate.

PREL has made a priority of capacity building in the educational communities of the entities (as opposed to scaling up its own efforts). Discussions with and by staff repeatedly highlight this priority. The operative concept is that “we do things with people and not to people.” Each activity in which PREL engages itself has a local capacity building module built in. Interviews with officials confirm that this capacity building has, in fact, occurred in the entities from which they come. Because Service Centers exist in most of the other entities, it may logically be inferred that capacity building has also occurred in these locations.

The number and variety of formative and summative evaluations and reviews made available to the team indicate that PREL understands the need to use ongoing assessment as a part of its operating procedure. It seems to regularly engage in a variety of such assessment activities. As an example, in its presentation on the R&D Cadre, PREL staff discussed a number of ongoing adjustments to the research process -- the draft Pacific Teacher Questionnaire and the Cadre’s revisions were presented; a member of the Research Advisory Panel indicated that he had given a number of suggestions which had been followed; the discussion about the modification of the list of studies originally planned for the Cadre was described.

The Quarterly Reports are completed in a timely manner. They do, however, tend to be repetitive. They also ignore or downplay (partly so as not to “toot a horn” from the individual’s own perspective) activities and roles of individuals (e.g. PREL’s role in the development of a CNMI textbook, the 1998 hosting of an REL Language and Cultural Diversity meeting, the role of the background of the director of the Al Maron project in the successes to date of that project); fail to discuss items which the previous report gave reason to believe would be discussed (the Hawaii RAPSTA report); give undue importance to small events (attendance at a NABE conference); and fail to explain the actual nature of items which appear in almost every report

(the nature of the relationships with partner institutions of higher education).

The Research Cadre was formed while PREL was still governed by the Northwest Laboratory in response to a plea that no more Margaret Mead-type research be done. Today, it brings research participation, development, interpretation, dissemination, and use to all of the entities has been active throughout the three years of the contract. Local Support Teams have been established throughout the region, turning the Cadre research into “systemic action research.” Thus the R&D activities of the REL are simultaneously macro and micro in scale. They give individual educators and schools ownership but at the same time provide information which can be used for regional policy making and which will, in the case of the PLUS study, fill knowledge gaps for the nation. The R&D Cadre builds capacity for understanding research, using research, and doing research.

PREL has recognized the value of low technology and has produced non-glamorous items such as audiotapes.

Joint activities with other REL's, particularly those sharing PREL's specialty area, are growing. Three years ago, PREL participated in a teleconference produced by SEDL; then it participated in a similar conference produced by LAB. This year, PREL produced a conference in which it invited the participation of the other two REL's. In addition, PREL has worked with these two REL's on a large research synthesis on helping teachers learn to teach English Language Learners. This synthesis is due to be printed in the next few weeks.

The Pacific Educational Conference (PEC) provides an affordable (depending on location) opportunity for teachers and other educators of the region to have professional contact with and learn from other educators of the region and the nation engaging in the same activities as are they. This conference, which has become a major event in the region, has also become a vehicle for other PREL activities. The host needs to learn to plan, to evaluate, and to use the same service to

accomplish more than one goal. The Pre-conference provides an opportunity to also share outside and other entity expertise. The strands teach participants to focus on developing in one area. University credit encourages participants to further their education. The Service Providers Directory (which was developed by PREL and has now become a REL requirement) connects educators with service providers throughout the region. A "reward" is available for educators who accomplish something special during the year.

Planning is a focus both within PREL and as a PREL-aided activity within the region. The Pacific Curriculum and Instruction Council (PCIC) representatives were identified as the most appropriate entity liaisons for planning. Permission was asked of the Chief State School Officers for this to be the operative representation. Entity educational planning has become a dynamic process. No longer are plans developed and placed on the shelf. Rather, plans are initially outlined, monitored, and updated as circumstances change. All of this occurs with PREL assistance. The PCIC has become a vehicle for sharing and thus is a vehicle for making known the changes in conditions which drive the dynamic in both the internal planning at PREL and in the entity planning facilitated by PREL.

From the documentation provided, it seems that a number of PREL services and products are not delivered in a timely manner. Many of the delays in product delivery may well be beyond the control of PREL; they stem from the lack of a time-conscious culture in much of the region. Production goals such as the completion of four Research Cadre projects have had to be changed because they could not conceivably be reached. Other completion issues, such as the skipping months in the production of briefing papers come from decisions to create less frequent but higher quality products. Nevertheless, timeliness of delivery seems to be an area in which PREL falls below the expectations it has set for itself. Perhaps the goals were not realistic in the first place.

PREL has often been able to combine other resources with its REL-funded activities to provide services which enhance both. A primary example of this combination is the development of regional service centers in a number of the entities. Funded by the REL, the Eisenhower Math and Science funds, the service center funds, and, at times, other grants, these centers provide a variety of services: they organize workshops for educators, advise education departments on planning, assist constituent entities in conducting research, develop materials, advise partner-clients, share their facilities with partner-clients, disseminate materials and findings, and even facilitate entity collaboration with other REL's. Like the PREL main office staff, the individuals who staff them (one per center) must deal with linguistic diversity, changing governments, a paucity of financial resources in many entities, a history of a number of the entities recently being subsistence economies in which formal education was relatively unimportant, and all the consequences of that history. They also must deal with an expectation that they will find ways of filling the myriad of disparate requests they receive. They have become, according to those interviewed in the entities, a valued resource.

Another example of PREL/REL joint use of resources is its working with Yap which had received a grant to produce primary language reading materials to also develop, with Yap teachers curriculum and methodology for using those materials.

A third example, of joint use is the partnership with the Kosrae schools to work with the teachers to develop a new technique for teaching primary language reading based on the syllable-combination nature of the language in Kosrae. That technique was then presented by partner Keti William at the Pre-Conference Literacy Institute before the 1998 PEC, thus giving others the ability to adapt it to their own situations.

A fourth example is the development of a demonstration project, Al Maron (a term which means *coming together* in the local language), at Ebeye School in the Marshall Islands. Al Maron

brings together all of PREL's divisions, the government of the Marshall Islands, a grant from Australia, and the community in which the school is located. It brings a math specialist as well as a reading specialist. It works to improve the facility so that it meets at least minimal requirements for being a school. It works to train teachers.

A fifth example of cooperation is the development of regional leadership through PEIR and the Leadership Institute. The first involves cooperation between entity education ministries and PREL. The ministry pays the intern's salary and provides the focus for his work. PREL pays an additional stipend so that the intern can afford to live in Honolulu and helps the intern with his work. PREL also taps the intern's knowledge to build its services for the region. The Leadership Institute permits administrators with little or no training to job shadow Hawaii administrators and thus get on-the-job training. These efforts are, according to interviewees, particularly important in that educational leadership in the entities can change as political leadership changes.

A sixth, and particularly important instance of cooperation involved the implementation of NCEE standards in the state of Hawaii. This Hawaii Department of Education effort was designed to include PREL. Three of the fifteen training slots were given to PREL which was then able to provide training for other entities.

Finally, several partners indicated that PREL cooperates in seeking joint grants rather than competing for funding with other agencies. It also aids entities in getting grants themselves. An example is assistance given the Republic of the Marshall Islands in obtaining Asian Development Bank grants.

PREL does not seem to have a clear process of resource allocation when there are no outside guidelines affecting the distribution of a particular pot of money. Is it by population? equal division amongst entities? first come first served? something else entirely? From one perspective, this is a strength because PREL can allocate its resources according to the exigencies

of a particular time but it is a concern as well as PREL does not always know what to plan for. PREL has a definite strength in that it is willing to fight for the region to get resources. An example of this is that, although it was excluded from the American Reads Challenge grants, it fought to get at least one for the region with the lowest reading scores (It succeeded and awarded the grant to a program which did not just provide short-term service, but which also focused on developing the capacity to sustain improvement).

The Systemic Reform Indicators and Scaling Up Indicators outlined in the proposal seem generally to have received little attention from PREL. Exceptions may be capacity building in the educational community which is noted above as a strength and enhancing leaders' abilities to collaborate to improve instruction which may follow from enhancing their abilities to collaborate in general.

The proposal requires PREL to maintain a staff development program for its own staff. On paper, the program would seem to consist primarily of sending staff members to conferences and of holding "brown-bag" seminars. These are neither needs focused nor ongoing in a consistent manner. However, oral presentations about internal staff development presented an entirely different picture. Professional development needs are a part of each individual's evaluation. A plan is developed and the individual is expected to follow it. Ongoing internal workshops are a part of PREL's activities.

It is not clear that the "trainer of trainers" model described in the proposal has been implemented. Perhaps it was overly ambitious.

1. Strengths

- The PREL Governing Board is representative of the entire region;
- PREL has made a priority of capacity building in the educational communities of the entities;

- PREL has a rigorously followed philosophy of doing things with others, not to others;
- The Research Cadre brings research participation, development, interpretation, dissemination, and use to all of the entities;
- PREL has helped restructure regional educational planning to make it dynamic in nature;
- Regional service centers make PREL accessible across its service area;
- The Annual PEC provides an affordable opportunity for teachers and other educators of the region to have professional contact with and learn from other educators, to further their own professional development, to gain college credit, and to develop the ability to organize and/or present professional development themselves.

2. Areas of Concern

- Timelines and production goals need to be more realistic;
- PREL does not seem to have a clear process of resource allocation;
- The trainer of trainers model needs to be developed;
- PREL must learn to document its own work. Some of this task needs to fall on the shoulders of those who are culturally comfortable with such documentation.

B. To what extent is PREL using a self-monitoring process to plan and adapt activities in response to feedback and customer needs?

PREL engages in a number of self-monitoring activities. In addition to the discussion outlined above in II. A. which documents ongoing evaluation, PREL has provided the panel with numerous evaluation documents: formative, summative, external peer review, Every time the R&D Cadre meets, a formative evaluation takes place.

PREL is a reflective organization which uses a variety of evaluation strategies to improve its work. The staff meets twice yearly for the purpose of self-review. It approaches the evaluations openly and honestly. It uses the evaluations to plan changes in its operations.

The evaluations/reviews may not always be conducted by appropriate bodies. For

example, it is not clear that Community Health Associates has the expertise to do such a review.

The results and effects of evaluation measures are not always noted. For example, “a follow-up survey of PREL staff regarding PREL’s new organizational structure was conducted on May 19, 1998....An analysis was carried out to compare results with an earlier baseline survey conducted in January 1998.” Nothing else is mentioned.

Needs assessments are unfocused. In one needs assessment, “PREL examined nine general education areas using 47 survey items.” However, who was surveyed, what type of response rate was achieved, what specific results were found are not noted. It is reported only that there were areas of agreement and areas of disagreement across entities. It was not reported whether there were agreements within entities or within job categories. Some of this lack of focus may come from PREL's laudable commitment to provide enough assistance to get the job done but not enough so as to create dependency. Nevertheless, improvement is needed in this area.

A final area of concern also probably stems from good intentions. Because PREL is working to develop local leadership capacity, almost all of the change it works is top-down. This means that classroom teachers and their ideas are largely ignored. It further means that classroom teachers probably feel no ownership of the change.

1. Strengths

- PREL approaches the evaluations openly and honestly;
- PREL tries not to create dependency;
- PREL models using evaluation to make change.

2. Areas of Concern

- The reform fostered by PREL is top-down; teachers' ideas are ignored and teachers have no ownership of the reform;
- The evaluations/reviews may not always be conducted by appropriate bodies;

- Needs assessments need to be more focused.

III. Quality

To what extent is PREL developing high quality products and services?

A review of the written material submitted by PREL would lead to the following statements: While the Board does have a policy requiring quality work, and, in fact, has expended a considerable amount of effort reworking procedures to implement this policy, it (the policy) still does not seem adequate to “ensure quality work.” Some of the problem may stem from the original proposal. For example, while the proposal indicates that “R&D based materials require an ‘external review,’” it also indicates that, at least to some extent, this review may be performed by bodies which are not, in fact, external. Furthermore, it gives no indication as to how it is determined whether a given individual/team is qualified to be an external reviewer. Also part of the problem is the use of imprecise terms throughout the policy. Examples include the terms “content-heavy,” “Level-1 product,” “reviewers with professional expertise in the specialty area” (as judged by whom is not indicated), “experts in research methodology” (a very broad category), and the stage of development at which a given type of review must take place (the policy would seem to permit methodology review to take place after a product is in completed form).

However, onsite interviews indicated that a far better Quality Assurance process actually governs the production of products. Immediately after a product is proposed, a review of the literature takes place. The conceptual framework of the product is reviewed at that time both internally and, when appropriate externally. In addition, the cultural appropriateness is checked out through an internal external (i.e. in the entity) process. The quality is monitored throughout

development and additional reviews are conducted at appropriate times.

PREL does, however, need a formal Quality Assurance process for its services. With the caveat that services can't always be well-tested and documented, PREL needs to develop and document a Service Quality Assurance Process. Incidentally, PREL also needs to document its services so that they can be replicated.

Another concern in the area of Quality is that there seem to be no consistent research methodology standards at PREL. Some of the work is sloppy by juried research standards but not by action research standards. PREL does provide training for those with whom it engages in action-type research, but provides few controls on how they work. An example is that interview protocols are not consistently used. Another is that sources of potential bias in studies seem not always to be given attention by PREL. For example, the lists of possible data elements on pages 3, 5, 7, and 9 of the "Pacific Region Educational Laboratory R&D Cadre Research Plan 1995-2000" clearly are not presented in a random manner; neither are they presented in a form belying their importance in the minds of the Research Cadre. This methodology situation could be remedied were PREL to make a methodology distinction between various types of research. Juried-research-appropriate rigor should be applied to research engaged in by staff members. Action-type research should have its own set of standards delineated. Another possibility would be to formalize an approach used in the PLUS study by simultaneously using more than one methodology. This would permit appropriate degrees of rigor to be used by the various participants in the research.

PREL uses several techniques to avoid duplication. Projects begin with a review of the literature which includes a check for what has already been done. The relative uniqueness of the Pacific region permits PREL to check easily for interlab and intraregion duplication. As a result, duplication is basically a non-issue.

The Quality of PREL's products seems good. The English products are well done. It is difficult to evaluate the quality of materials that I don't understand (those in other regional languages) but all indications are that it is also high. Careful attention is given to the aspect of product quality — appearance. In the Pacific region, this is a respect issue because entities have often feel that they have been accorded little respect by outsiders.

1. Strengths

- The review of proposed projects must include the perspective of proposed “partners;”
- Projects always begin with a review of the literature;
- Careful attention is given to the appearance of products.

2. Areas of Concern

- The written description of the Quality Assurance process needs work;
- PREL needs to develop a Quality Assurance process for services;
- Methodology distinctions need to be made depending on the nature of the research; methodological rigor needs to be developed to the extent to which it is appropriate for a given research activity;
- Attention needs to be given to all areas of potential bias in studies.

IV. Utility

A. To what extent are the products and services provided by the Laboratory useful to and used by customers?

Interviews confirm that PREL's activities are almost always useful to and used by customers. While some of these services take place over a relatively short time frame, almost all are designed to have a long-term effect. This is assured by the rapport between PREL and educators in the entities and by the interaction between PREL and those who use its services.

One example of this type of service is the two-day administrative facilitation conducted regularly, but on demand, in the state of Hawaii. This is designed to meet special needs which may arise. Another is the curriculum and instructional procedure development held on Yap to enable the teachers to use effectively the new readers printed by the government. Another indicator of the utility of PREL's services is relationship it has developed with a variety of partners for improvement. Some are focused on particular entities: in several of the entities, a writer's institute has taught teachers to write and has produced primary language books; in Kosrae, it has helped develop a new system for teaching reading; in Hawaii, it has worked with a drug education program and with reading programs; in CNMI, a local history text was developed together with the ministry of education. Some are region-wide: the Pacific Isles in Communication (PIC) project has provided the region with videos funded by PBS; the PALM CD-ROM project has preserved significant primary language print resources in a region in which the climate causes paper to disintegrate quickly.

One of the major services provided by PREL and one that is particularly user-friendly is the Pacific Educational Conference. This conference has both elements of strength and elements needing improvement. The, for PREL, overarching priority of literacy is reflected in the creation of a strand of presentations both in a pre-conference and in the conference itself. However, the efficacy as staff development of the strand of presentations is left to chance in that the presenters are basically those who choose to present, not even those who choose to present who can present evidence of ability to present and evidence of relevance of topic. Furthermore, literacy seems to be an elementary school issue at the conference whereas, in reality, it is a K-12 issue. The PEC puts the needs of the region first; resume building is not a major purpose. As a result, the educators (and parents) of the region feel (as confirmed by surveys, interviews) that the PEC meets their needs.

In some cases, the use and usefulness of products and services cannot be readily assessed. For example, in a report dated 1/31/98, it is written that “staff...coordinated assistance to establish a long-term training-of-trainers project on language assessment...of Limited English Proficient students.” No further information is provided.

Some of PREL's services are designed to be of a long-term character. These include the creation of entity five-year plans, Research Cadre studies, and the intensive implementation project at Ebeye School in the RMI. These are the services which would be more conducive to providing evidence of changes in student success as a result of PREL's services if the appropriate data were gathered (I would recommend that in the future it should be gathered).

One concern relative to the usefulness of long-term services is that sometimes services are provided as requested and at the end, they turn out to be less useful than anticipated. An example is the RAPSTA study. A great deal of effort went into the study and Quarterly Reports kept anticipating its completion. However, upon completion, it turned out that many of its findings dealt with non-issues. Perhaps preliminary studies could be used to at least partially avoid this problem.

In the area of utility, PREL's communication throughout the entity should win an award. PREL has developed several vehicles for broad dissemination. The website is easy to use and is kept up-to-date. A regular publication, the *Update*, which goes to all educators in the region, presents things such as innovative ideas and short summaries of research and of happenings. Briefing papers have evolved over time to their present 5 1/2 page summary the knowledge in a particular area. They provide detail which is adequate for understanding but not so great that they are only readable by the highly educated.

There are some minor concerns in this area: The Hawaii Department of Education wants targeted services and PREL is not yet sure how to meet those needs while not overextending

itself. This may be partly because PREL's resource allocation needs to be more explicit.

1. Strengths

- PREL is helping the entities to develop dynamic long-term planning capacity;
- The Pacific Educational Conference puts the needs of the region first;
- PREL arranges for university credit for conference attendees;
- PREL provides reliable service to the outlying entities in its service region;
- PREL is preserving a set of significant primary language print resources through the medium of CD-ROM and not only making the resources accessible to teachers but also making them modifiable by the teacher to fit the requirements of individual classrooms;
- Briefing papers make the knowledge base accessible to people in the region;
- PREL is developing the capacity for innovative curriculum development;
- Dissemination is regular and widespread - "Updates" are disseminated to all teachers; PREL maintains an accessible and frequently up-dated website;
- PREL considers the utility of services as part of the development process.

2. Areas of Concern

- Major emphasis over several reports was placed on research syntheses to be forthcoming on teacher stress and teacher burnout. It was to be presented in July 1998. However, it turned out to be basically a non-issue;
- PREL needs to make its resource allocation policy more explicit, at least internally;
- Efficacy as staff development of attendance at a pre-conference session along with its accompanying strand of conference sessions needs attention;
- Literacy needs to be made a K-12 issue;
- Strategies such as preliminary studies need to be employed to determine the need for a full-scale study.

B. To what extent is PREL focused on customer needs?

PREL seems unclear as to who its customers are. To the extent that the customers are all

educators in the region, PREL seems focused on serving those customers who are clamoring for service, namely State Education Agencies in the outlying entities and, to a lesser but still great extent, elementary school educators. It seems less focused on those who, while great in numbers, are not overtly clamoring for service and so present a challenge in that the Lab is to serve the entire region – the State of Hawaii, the Territory of Guam and high school educators. Certainly evidence exists that all of these customers are served to some extent. However, PREL staff readily discusses the non-receptiveness of the education bureaucracies in Hawaii and Guam. It rarely mentions REL services to high school educators, but reports indicate that it does engage in some services, for example the peer coaching workshops at Waianae High School. It also contracts with individual schools in Hawaii, usually in a partnership relationship.

One reason that PREL has difficulty identifying its customers is that it also has difficulty identifying its priorities. There are 32 listed priorities according to the “Report of the 1998 PREL Staff Review of Recommendations from the 1997 External Peer Review Report.” While one priority, literacy, has been identified as overarching, PREL still cannot really focus on specific needs. The difficulties regarding the lack of utility of RAPSTA, discussed earlier, also are relevant here. PREL cannot focus on customer needs if it's not sure what those needs are. PREL gets formal feedback about customer needs but that feedback is focused on expressed needs. PREL's needs assessments would be stronger if they documented informal feedback, and included more strategic analysis and needs sensing.

Another reason that PREL has trouble identifying its customers is that, outside of Hawaii, it works almost entirely through the ministries of education. There are good reasons for this, but the choice to work through the ministries means that teachers are rarely directly served and perhaps poorly served. If PREL were also to work through the teachers unions where they exist, it would better serve this larger group of its customers. It should be noted that PREL does work

with the union a bit in Hawaii. However, in Guam, where the AFT local has an active Educational Research and Dissemination Program, PREL does not work with the union to achieve common goals.

On the other hand when PREL receives a request, it tries to find a way to get that request fulfilled — even if it cannot fill the request itself. In this way, it tries to make sure its customers are always served.

PREL's products are culturally and linguistically appropriate for the entities which it serves. This means that customer service is real, not a surface imitation of service. Furthermore, PREL's products are carefully constructed to have a level of detail which permits use by all educators across the region, whether minimally (for an educator) educated or well educated.

1. Strengths

- Needs assessments cover the entire region;
- Care is taken to tailor products culturally and linguistically;
- Care is taken to make the level of detail in products appropriate for the audience.

2. Areas of Concern

- Priority setting in the REL is not a clear process;
- Teachers' unions need to become partners; PREL needs to coordinate with AFT ER&D;
- PREL needs to be clearer as to who its customers are.

V. Outcomes and Impact

A. To what extent is PREL's work contributing to improved student success, particularly in intensive implementation sites?

The Pacific region is one of the lowest performing regions in the United States, its

territories, and its associated states. Spencer, in her study of Micronesian literacy, found widespread illiteracy, both in English and in the primary language. She further noted that instructional methods then in place were largely ineffective. The need is clearly great and the national agenda demands that improvement take place **now**.

While the national timeline is perhaps unrealistic in much of the region, it cannot be ignored. Neither can the enormity of the task be used as an excuse to avoid it. PREL understands that a bandaid approach will not work and that no single approach will work throughout the region. It fought for reading improvement grants being awarded in the region and when only one was awarded, sought multiple applications so that the money could be spent as wisely as possible. After a competition, the region grant was awarded to a consortium of Hawaii organizations which not only trained many volunteers but developed protocols for such training in the region and made tapes so that the training could be replicated. As funding has ended, the formal project has ended. Because baseline data does exist in the state of Hawaii, PREL needs to ensure the collection of follow-up data to validate the project approach (or to rule it out if it was ineffective).

The need for data is great throughout the region. Previously, no instrument has existed to measure primary language literacy in the new orthography. The PLUS study of the R&D Cadre is creating such instruments. Other student achievement instruments appropriate to the region need to be found or created. PREL has begun working at one intensive implementation site, Ebeye School in the RMI, and contemplates working at others. PREL has relied on informally collected data to confirm that its work at Ebeye is having an effect. However, such informal data will provide neither justification for further funding nor a basis for convincing other jurisdictions to implement a replication of Ebeye activities.

As has been in the case in other areas of its work, PREL has begun its work in improving

literacy by reviewing the literature. In particular, it has looked intensively at the literature of teaching reading to students whose primary language is not English. This review needs to be extended to include an examination of what has been discovered about improving literacy in other communities in which English (or in some cases Standard English) is not the language of everyday communication but in which English is the language of educated discourse: isolated Native American and Inuit communities, Caribbean islands, Singapore, Canada, and Australia. It also should be extended to include an examination of what has been learned in countries such as Switzerland (German and Italian speaking areas), the indigenous tongue speaking portions of Latin America, and the Arabic speaking world about teaching reading in a second language to students whose primary language is not written (although some may refer to some of the primary languages as dialects precisely because they are not written – note that in much of the Arabic speaking world, English has become the language of advanced education). Some of these literatures may also inform efforts in the Pacific region because they discuss education in regions in which the resources available for education approximate those available in the Pacific region.

Because the area of literacy instruction for students who can either be classified as English Language Learners or as students for whom English will be the language of advanced education is an area in which conventional wisdom often holds that quick fixes exist, working with policy makers to create and implement a sound instructional policy is a constant challenge. PREL has responded to this challenge by advocating the theoretically sound approach of developing both reading skill and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in the primary language while at the same time developing Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) in English. English literacy is then built upon this foundation.

PREL has developed a variety of media for disseminating this knowledge to the policy makers of the region and to the teachers who bring instruction to students and whose knowledge

and skill in implementing that knowledge are crucial to student success. Briefing papers, power point summaries of the knowledge base, written summaries of presentations, research syntheses, and website presentations are among the products PREL has produced so that this knowledge can become widely understood throughout the region. PREL has also moved beyond to develop curriculum and instructional methodology development capacity among educational leaders and policy makers in the region. Pre-conference institutes, policy development consultation (with ministries), exemplar development institutes (on Yap), intensive implementation (at Ebeye), and administrative training (administrative internships and PEIR), exemplar curricula (Yap and PEC) and service center responsiveness have all contributed to the foundation for student success that PREL is creating in its service region.

This brings us full circle back to the assessment and documentation issues. PREL is now making its findings known through its web site, papers, teleconference, and publications, but it can't present them as formal findings because the documentation instruments and skills have not yet been developed. The danger remains that PREL's impressive achievements will be discounted or countermanded because of this lack of documentation of students' success.

1. Strengths

- PREL has made the relationship between L1 literacy and CALP and L2 BICS and L2 literacy a foundation for its work to achieve student success;
- PREL has made a commitment to the process of capacity building throughout the region so that student success is not limited to isolated sites;
- PREL has developed a variety of ways to make the foundations necessary for student success known to the region;
- PREL communicates a basic respect for teachers in region which translates into their being willing partners in the effort to achieve student success;
- PREL has eschewed bandaid approaches and quick fixes.

2. Areas of Concern

- PREL needs to develop ways of measuring its impact on students, at least in samples;
- PREL needs to collect formal impact data in locations in which this is possible;
- PREL needs to make its findings known to the world;
- PREL should look at other situations which can inform Pacific education: isolated Native American and Inuit communities, Caribbean islands, Singapore, Switzerland, rural Arabic-speaking regions, etc.

B. To what extent does PREL assist states and localities to implement comprehensive school improvement strategies?

This is one of PREL's great strengths. Interviews confirm that PREL has developed a relationship with the educational leadership of the region's entities (other than the state of Hawaii) which makes it a partner in educational planning throughout the region. This planning is focused on visions and goals and is structured so that it can be adjusted as conditions change. Through this planning, PREL also assists schools in leveraging resources, in developing outside alliances, and in creating relationships with a variety of partners for improvement (confirmed by interviews).

Under PREL's influence, comprehensive school improvement strategies in the region have focused on literacy and leadership. The extremely low literacy level in the region has been documented by Spencer. She also documented that this low literacy level has been exacerbated by the lack of understanding of the role of primary language in developing literacy and the poor quality of the materials for teaching literacy in English that were introduced several decades ago. Other factors contributing to the low literacy rates in the region include the lack of new materials for teaching in any language, the lack of training of many of the teachers and administrators, and the severe lack of facilities.

PREL has worked in a variety of ways to improve the teaching of reading in both the

primary language and in English. Examples include the creation of a CD-ROM which preserves all of the primary language reading material previously developed. These materials can now be modified by teachers (to modern orthography at a minimum) so that they can be used in classrooms everyday. Keti William, with PREL support (confirmed by interview) has developed a method for teaching Kosrae children to read their language through a syllabary based method. At the annual conference (a major contributor to comprehensive school improvement discussed elsewhere in this document), she is teaching others to use this method. PREL has worked with Yap teachers to develop curriculum around the books now being printed in the languages of Yap; it is using its Pacific Educators Conference to train teachers; it makes information about effective programs available through the conference, publications including *Update*, and its accessible Website; it has training tapes planned with visiting scholar Alberto Schifini; and it helps teachers through the service centers (discussed elsewhere in this document).

PREL assists in leadership development with several programs. The PEIR program brings educators to work in Hawaii at the PREL main center for one or two years to develop specific skills. The Pacific internship brings principals to Hawaii to job-shadow administrators who have been through extensive administrator training. The Leadership Academy has held institutes for over two years. It is intended to provide one principal and one central office administrator from each entity with the skills necessary to implement the long-term sustained effort required for improvement. Leadership facilitation provides 2 day sessions in Hawaii to help administrators handle special circumstances

Finally, a major effort in the development of comprehensive school improvement is its work in the Al Maron project at Ebeye School in RMI. Working in a school which was in almost every way dysfunctional, PREL has leveraged multiple resources to improve schooling there. It

has also committed to then share what is learned with others needing similar improvement strategies.

1. Strengths

- PREL understands the need for and is working to develop primary language literacy as well as English literacy;
- PREL makes information accessible throughout the region;
- PREL works to help the entities achieve their own visions and goals;
- PREL has helped the entities leverage other resources in this effort;
- PREL has developed relationships with variety of partners for improvement.

2. Areas of Concern

None noted

C. To what extent has PREL made progress in establishing a regional and national reputation in its specialty area?

Content, at first, to do specialty area work only within its region, PREL has begun to take a leadership role in working with SEDL and LAB, the Labs which share its specialty area. As a result, PREL is also beginning to develop a national reputation in the area. It is doing this both by producing solid theoretically based work which clearly eschews quick fixes and by producing some excellent products. A readable research synthesis, an excellent teleconference, briefing papers which convey information to region practitioners in digestible chunks, and an annual pre-conference and conference which have numerous sessions focusing on this specialty area all are helping to make PREL known. A particularly important contribution made by PREL is in the area of helping parents to understand that they should converse with their children in their best language and that they should work to develop thinking and analytic ability in that language because Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency need develop only once but must develop for

a student to make progress in school.

In the region, requests for specialty area work from PREL are near myriad in number. That a great number come from region policy makers is another indicator of the respect with which PREL is held in the region. The state of Hawaii, which had leaned toward using only mainland expertise, is beginning to show that it, too, values PREL's work.

However, PREL's specialty area work also leaves some room for concern — particularly as regards its developing a national reputation. PREL needs to work, over time, to make its specialty area work K-12 in scope. At present, this work is focused mainly at the primary level. While this focus is rooted in an understandable motivation of wanting to develop a firm foundation, PREL needs to begin to meet the needs of intermediate and secondary educators and students.

A second concern is that while PREL has developed a research synthesis for the specialty area which is both readable and accessible by those in the region for whom English is a second language, the synthesis does not include the most recent research in the field. A third is that while PREL's specialty area work includes several approaches, it does not include the important language development through content area instruction.

A fourth concern lies in the areas of collaboration with outside experts in the specialty area and publications in refereed journals. While outside experts are becoming more expert and visiting scholars are becoming more willing to come to the PREL region, too much of PREL's work does not further the development of a national reputation for PREL. For example, PREL staff have published few journal articles, only one of which was juried. It is true that both outside collaboration and publication are dependent upon the reputation of PREL's researchers and those reputations are just beginning to grow, but PREL does need to make conscious efforts to disseminate its work nationwide and to develop many working links with experts at other

institutions.

1. Strengths

- PREL's specialty area work is theoretically based, eschewing quick fixes;
- PREL is taking leadership in working with SEDL and LAB, the Labs which share its specialty area;
- PREL is beginning to develop a national reputation in the area.

2. Areas of Concern

- PREL needs to work, over time, to make its specialty area work K-12 in scope;
- PREL's specialty area work should include language development through content area instruction;
- PREL's research synthesis needs to include recently produced research;
- PREL must improve dissemination of its specialty area work.

VI. Overall Evaluation of Total Laboratory Programs, Products, and Services

PREL is a Laboratory which is focused on its own service region. It builds capacity and consciously does not foster dependency. It concentrates on products and services which serve its own region. It is a reflective organization which focuses on the needs of its customers. It tailors its products to its region, uses its services to accomplish more than one purpose, and it helps its customers leverage other resources. Its approach in its specialty area is theoretically sound. It truly is contributing to the improvement of educational services in the Pacific Region.

VII. Broad Summary of Strengths, Areas for Improvement, and Strategies for Improvement

1. Strengths

- PREL serves the entire region;
- PREL has a rigorously followed philosophy of doing things with others, not to others; it works to build capacity in the entities to provide comprehensive education services and to achieve their own visions and goals;
- PREL has helped restructure regional educational planning to make it dynamic in nature;
- PREL's products and services are tailored to customer needs; regional service centers make PREL accessible across its service area;
- The Pacific Educational Conference provides a professional development opportunity for educators of the region;
- PREL not only focuses on literacy, it understands literacy issues in the region; it has made the relationship between L1 literacy and CALP and L2 BICS and L2 literacy a foundation for its work to achieve student success;
- Dissemination is regular and widespread;
- PREL has helped the entities leverage other resources in this effort;
- PREL's specialty area work is theoretically based, eschewing quick fixes.

2. Areas of Concern

- PREL's most serious problem lies in the area of documentation. It must learn to document its own work. Some of this task needs to fall on the shoulders of those who are culturally comfortable with such documentation;
- PREL does not seem to have a clear process of resource allocation. It needs to make its policy more explicit, at least internally, and to document its processes;
- The written description of the Quality Assurance process for products needs work; a Quality Assurance process for services needs to be developed;
- Methodology rigor of research needs attention;
- Priority setting in the REL is not a clear process;

- Efficacy as staff development of attendance at PEC needs attention;
- PREL needs to be clearer as to who its customers are;
- PREL needs to develop ways of measuring its impact on students, at least in samples;
- PREL needs to work, over time, to make its specialty area work K-12 in scope and to include language development through content area instruction;
- PREL needs to respond more clearly to recommendations for improvement.