

REL Pacific Program Guide:

Working Together to Answer Education Questions that Matter





Letter from the Director

The Regional Educational Laboratory of the Pacific (REL Pacific) program at McREL International partners with schools, state departments of education, and other education stakeholders to use data and research to drive data-informed decisions. Our dedicated, experienced staff work closely with local experts, who provide support for ongoing regional needs sensing, communication, and coordination of service delivery.

We plan and conduct our studies with a highly qualified set of partners, who provide us with insight on activities taking place in the Pacific region and throughout the nation that are relevant to our work, and offer support to develop studies that meet current research standards to better serve you. In this brochure, we provide information on our work, our partners, and the communities we serve. We hope you enjoy learning more about REL Pacific, and we look forward to working with you in 2014 and beyond to help provide your students with opportunities for success.

Sincerely,
Dr. Nolan Malone
Vice President, Pacific Operations
Director, REL Pacific at McREL

About REL Pacific

REL Pacific is one of 10 Regional Educational Laboratories established and funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences, serving educators in the state of Hawai'i; the territories of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and Guam; and the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. Located in Honolulu, Hawaii, REL Pacific is housed at and operated by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning's (McREL) Pacific Center for Changing the Odds (PCCO), a private nonprofit corporation that draws upon the best of education research to translate what works into innovations and results.

Reaching Out to the Region/Our Priority Areas

At REL Pacific, we understand the Pacific region's unique characteristics, strengths, and challenges because we listen to you. We identify priority needs in the region through comprehensive reviews of education system data, interviews with education agency staff, and ongoing contact with the field, and use that information to drive our research, technical assistance, and dissemination efforts. As a result of this outreach, we have identified four overarching priority areas to guide our work:

For more information about needs sensing, or to share information on a need within the region, contact Beth Gleason at 808.664.8182 or bgleason@mcrel.org.

1. Strengthening Teacher Effectiveness: a focus on increasing teachers' qualifications, determining characteristics of effective teachers, and identifying the best classroom practices to impact student outcomes;
2. Engaging Families and Communities in Education: a focus on connecting schools, families, and communities to work together to support learning;
3. Ensuring Career and College Readiness: a focus on preparing students to enter the workforce or to pursue college or technical education upon exiting Pacific high schools; and
4. Optimizing Data Systems: a focus on developing, maintaining, and use using data systems effectively and efficiently.



Research Alliances

At REL Pacific, we support “research alliances” that bring together key stakeholders to work collaboratively to address problems and questions of high priority and relevance to Pacific education, including teacher effectiveness, family and community engagement, college and career readiness, data optimization, and more. Working together with REL Pacific staff, alliance members identify problems and questions to be answered through research and evaluation, participate in the development of longitudinal data systems, apply research and evaluation study findings to inform decision making and practices, and use the skills and knowledge they've gained to help others do the same.

In 2014, REL Pacific is supporting eight research alliances:

- FSM Research Alliance
- Marshall Islands Research Alliance
- Palau Research Alliance
- Pacific Alliance for Student Success (PASS)
- Guam Alliance for Family and Community Engagement in Education
- American Samoa Alliance for College and Career Readiness
- CNMI Alliance for College and Career Readiness
- Hawaii Partnership for Educational Research Consortium (HPERC)

For more information about research alliances, or to request to join an alliance, contact Jean Isip at 808.664.8181 or jisip@mcrel.org.

Research Studies

Through needs sensing in the Pacific region and by working closely with its research alliances, REL Pacific has developed a set of ongoing research and evaluation studies aligned with the high-priority topic areas and designed to address the specific needs of research alliance members. To conduct these studies, REL Pacific collects and analyzes data in collaboration with departments and ministries of education, school administrators, and institutions of higher education. Studies currently underway focus on

- Benchmarking education management information systems in the Federated States of Micronesia;
- Exploring the academic readiness of incoming students to Northern Marianas College*;
- Exploring patterns of success at Northern Marianas College*;
- Patterns and results of a practice teacher certification examination in the Republic of Palau;
- Enrollment, demographic, and program participation characteristics of Guam's FAS Micronesian students;
- College Readiness among high school completers in American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; and
- College readiness and success in Guam*.

For more information on any of these research studies, please contact Lou Cicchinelli at 303.632.5509 or at lcicchinelli@mcrel.org.

*These studies are proposed and are pending IES approval.



Ask-a-REL

Ask-a-REL is a collaborative reference desk service provided by the ten regional educational laboratories (RELs) that act as a technical reference library. Ask-a-REL provides references, referrals, and additional resources to help answer education questions. REL Pacific can provide the following types of information as part of the Ask-a-REL service:

- Referrals to IES research projects;
- References for, or electronic copies of, IES publications or reports;
- References or bibliographies of topic-specific existing education research;
- Referrals to websites or federally funded education organizations;
- Region-specific education information

To submit a request through Ask-a-REL, visit the REL Pacific webpage at <http://relpacific.mcrel.org/askREL.html>.

Technical Assistance Services

REL Pacific also offers customized technical assistance services and resources for educators and policymakers that help translate research findings into everyday practice. Technical support projects are intended to advance the understanding of data and how it can serve to inform decision making, and can include

Environmental scans, which analyze relevant research and assesses the implications that information may have on the organization's decision making. Environmental scanning can be used to identify and monitor important trends, activities, and developments in an organization's institutional fields. They may be conducted to answer questions such as, "What is happening in my field that affects my organization's work?"

Policy scans, which can be used to collect information on important changes or advancements in policy. Unlike environmental scanning, policy scanning does not analyze research, only relevant policy.

Data inventories, which can be used to identify and categorize available data. Data inventories document what data a school system, complex, district, or state currently collects, and what additional data are necessary in order to conduct research around areas of interest.

Projects underway in 2014 focus on

- Teacher absenteeism across the region;
- Data analysis training in Palau;
- Using student longitudinal data systems to increase college and career readiness in American Samoa;
- College and career readiness in the CNMI;
- Engaging families and communities in Guam;
- Utilization of Hawai'i-specific, publicly available data sources; and
- Responding to data analysis requests (see sidebar).

For more information or to request technical support, please contact Wendy Kekahio at 808.664.8177 or wkekahio@mcrel.org.



Data Analysis

If you need help understanding the quality of available data or analyzing specific data, the REL Pacific can help build your capacity. We offer technical assistance such as:

- Blank templates for data compilation, organization, and reporting;
- Guidance on methods to store, track, and analyze student or program data;
- Tools for managing data in various formats;
- In-person or remote modeling of and training on basic data analysis and information systems; and
- Helping research alliances to identify challenges and data-driven solutions.

To request assistance with data analysis, please email RELPacific@mcrel.org or call 808.664.8175.

Keeping the Region Informed/Available Resources

Throughout the year, REL Pacific develops presentations, reports, and resources to keep our stakeholders informed. Available products and resources developed to date include

Our expertly facilitated, face-to-face and virtual **Bridging Research, Policy, and Practice (Bridge) events**, which bring stakeholders the latest research and information on high-priority topics and the work we're conducting. These events often respond to requests for information from the field.

The **Pacific Education Research Resource (PERR)**, released in early 2014, is an innovative computer-based, self-executing, interactive set of two modules designed to guide users through creating logic models. Structured similarly to programs such as TurboTax, the PERR modules take the typical "how-to" guide to the next level, providing a practical, hands-on resource for educators to better understand, monitor, and evaluate their programs and develop program outcomes. The first module in the set, the Education Logic Model (ELM), guides users through creating a logic model in order to determine how data fit within the larger design of a program and how they relate to different program components. The second module, the Program Outcomes, Measures, and Targets (POMT) application focuses on developing program outcomes, indicators, measures, and targets for a program's short-, mid, and long-term outcomes. The PERR modules are available at <http://relpacific.mcrel.org/PERR.html>. To complement the modules, REL Pacific has created a series of hard-copy quick-reference guides:

Logic models: A tool for effective program planning, collaboration, and monitoring, available at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014025.pdf

Logic models: A tool for designing and monitoring program evaluations, available at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014007.pdf, and

Understanding program monitoring: The relationships among outcomes, indicators, measures, and targets, available at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014011.pdf

Program monitoring: The role of leadership in planning, assessment, and communication, available at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2014034.pdf



We want to know about your education successes, challenges, issues, priorities, and needs. To ask for help with research or technical assistance, or to share your stories or submit additional requests, call us at 808.664.8175 or email relpacific@mcrel.org



Our Partners

- » University of Guam, Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service (Guam CEDDERS)—Mangilao, Guam
- » Chesapeake Research Associates, LLC—Annapolis, Maryland
- » Island Innovation, LLC—Maui, Hawai'i
- » The JoDoCo Group, Inc.—Aurora, Colorado
- » Pacific Policy Research Center—Honolulu, Hawai'i

Five Steps for Structuring Data-Informed Conversations and Action in Education

by Wendy Kekahio and Myriam Baker

Using data strategically to guide decisions and actions can have a positive effect on education practices and processes. This facilitation guide shows education data teams how to move beyond simply reporting data to applying data to direct strategic action. Using guiding questions, suggested activities, and activity forms, this guide provides education data teams with a framework and the tools and vocabulary needed to support an informed conversation around the data they generate or acquire. The guide walks data teams through five key steps in using data for informed decision making and strategic action: setting the stage, examining the data, understanding the findings, developing an action plan, and monitoring progress and measuring success. *Five Steps for Structuring Data-Informed Conversations and Action in Education* is available at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/pdf/REL_2013001.pdf.

REL Pacific's periodic **Research Guides** provide information on the purpose and design of REL Pacific and cross-laboratory studies, available REL Pacific resources, and upcoming work. Our research digests are available at <http://relpacific.mcrel.org/reports-publications.html>.

Our **Quarterly Newsletters** feature success stories from the Pacific, events and opportunities in the Pacific region and across the nation, technical support programs, available resources from REL Pacific, and features on REL Pacific staff and board members. Our quarterly newsletters can be found at <http://relpacific.mcrel.org/reports-publications.html>.

For more information on REL Pacific events and resources, visit relpacific.mcrel.org or contact Kirsten Miller at kmiller@mcrel.org or 303.632.5632

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Changing the Odds**

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