



# English language proficiency assessment in the Pacific Region



Institute of Education Sciences  
U.S. Department of Education



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June 2007

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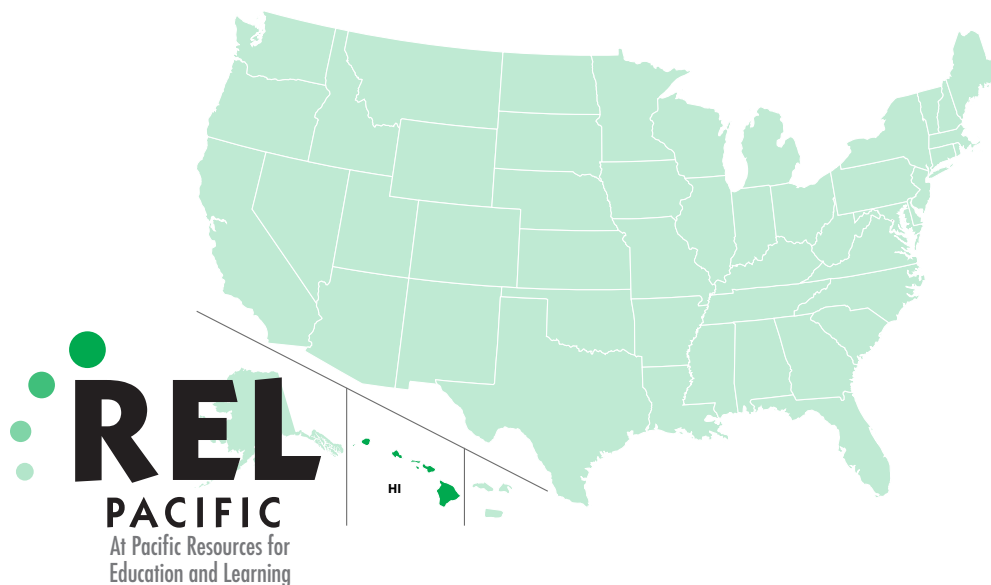
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## Summary

# English language proficiency assessment in the Pacific Region

**Using various approaches to identify English language learners, several Pacific Region jurisdictions are developing English language proficiency standards and assessments aligned with those standards. Others are working on content standards, including language arts, and have expressed interest in developing English language proficiency standards but lack formal assessment mechanisms.**

Title I of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that all students in a school, including English language learners, take the same state academic assessments in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science beginning with school year 2007/08. This mandate is of special concern to the Regional Educational Laboratory for the Pacific Region (REL Pacific), because all jurisdictions within its service region have large numbers of English language learners or limited English proficiency students in their school systems. Although English is used as a language of instruction in schools across the region, each jurisdiction

has an official language or languages other than English. Children often do not receive sustained exposure to English until they begin formal schooling.

To find out about the current status of English language proficiency standards and assessment across the Pacific Region, REL Pacific surveyed each jurisdiction, gathering information about the existence and implementation of standards and assessments and future plans for them. The results provide an opportunity to share information across jurisdictions about approaches to English language proficiency standards and assessment and provide insights into critical needs in the region that can be used to guide future program activities.

To identify English language learners, four jurisdictions (American Samoa, Guam, Hawai‘i, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) use home-language surveys. Some also use commercially available tests and ethnicity data. The freely associated states (Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Republic of Palau), where English is not the dominant language,

do not categorize English language learners as a separate population subgroup and so have no formal processes to identify them.

The Pacific Region jurisdictions are continuing to develop their educational accountability systems, including English language proficiency standards and aligned assessments. Hawai'i is awaiting approval of its English language proficiency standards. American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands are preparing their standards. The freely associated states have completed or are working on content standards, including language arts, and have expressed interest in developing English language proficiency standards.

American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, and the Northern Mariana Islands have used or are using commercially developed, off-the-shelf tests to assess English language proficiency. The other jurisdictions do not have formal assessment mechanisms. The commercially developed assessments have not been contextualized to the Pacific Region or aligned

with local standards. In most jurisdictions the cost of testing more than 80 percent of the students makes using these assessments impossible. The U.S. Department of Education has awarded the Hawai'i Department of Education, Pacific Resources for Education and Learning, and a consortium of the American Samoa Department of Education, the Guam Public School System, and the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System an Enhanced Assessment Grant that enables them to test and develop culturally appropriate English language proficiency assessments aligned with English language proficiency standards for each education agency.

This process of developing English language proficiency standards and assessments could be greatly facilitated through collaboration among jurisdictions, support from the U.S. Department of Education, provision of Pacific Resources for Education and Learning services, and additional research.

**June 2007**

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**Using various approaches to identify English language learners, several Pacific Region jurisdictions are developing English language proficiency standards and assessments aligned with those standards. Others are working on content standards, including language arts, and have expressed interest in developing English language proficiency standards but lack formal assessment mechanisms.**

## OVERVIEW

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has focused increasing attention on the education needs of English language learners in U.S. public schools. Title I of the act requires that all students in a school, including English language learners, take the same state academic assessments in reading/language arts, mathematics, and science beginning with school year 2007/08. (See box 1 for definitions of key terms.) These mandates are of special concern to the Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific, because all the jurisdictions within its service region have large numbers of English language learners or limited English proficiency students in their school systems.

To learn about the current status of English language proficiency standards and assessment across the Pacific Region, REL Pacific surveyed each jurisdiction, gathering information about the existence and implementation of standards and assessments and future plans for them. The results provide an opportunity to share information across jurisdictions about approaches to English language proficiency standards and assessment and provide insights into critical needs in the region that can be used to guide future program activities.

Four jurisdictions (American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands) use home-language surveys to identify English language learners. The freely associated states (Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Republic of Palau), where English is not the dominant language, do not categorize English language learners as a separate population subgroup, and so they have no formal processes to identify them.

The Pacific Region jurisdictions are continuing to develop their educational accountability systems, including English language proficiency standards and assessments. Hawai'i is awaiting approval of its English language proficiency standards.

## BOX 1

**Some key terms**

For clarification, certain terms that are used throughout this report are defined as follows:

*Aligned assessments* are associated with specific standards and benchmarks and measure student achievement of these standards.

*English language learners* are students in the process of acquiring social and/or academic English language skills. In most cases these students have learned a language other than English for use at home or in their community.

*English language proficiency standards* outline English language proficiency achievement goals. English language proficiency standards are not the same as reading/language arts standards, however. To achieve

content area standards, a student must have the language proficiency to comprehend the subject material. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 specifies that English language proficiency standards must address listening, speaking, reading, writing, and comprehension (as measured by listening and reading). English language proficiency standards cover all grade levels (K–12) and must be linked to content standards in reading/language arts and mathematics. Students' English proficiency levels should be based on their achievement of English language proficiency standards.

*Language proficiency* comprises receptive (reading and listening) and productive (speaking and writing) language skills. The definition also may include social and academic (or school) language. Proficiency in a second language, according to Hargett (1998), is the ability to “effectively communicate or understand

thoughts or ideas through the language’s grammatical system and its vocabulary, using its sounds or written symbols.”

*Titles I and III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.* The act requires that:

- English language learners receive instruction that uses approaches based on scientifically sound research to attain English language proficiency.
- English language learners in grades K–12 take an annual assessment in English language proficiency that covers reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
- States establish annual measurable achievement objectives for school districts as they move English language learners toward English proficiency.

American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands are preparing their standards. The freely associated states have completed or are working on content standards, including language arts, and have expressed interest in developing English language proficiency standards. American Samoa, Guam, Hawai‘i, and the Northern Mariana Islands have used or are using commercially developed tests to assess English language proficiency. The other jurisdictions do not have formal assessment mechanisms.

This process of developing English language proficiency standards and assessments could be greatly facilitated through collaboration among jurisdictions, support from the U.S. Department of Education, provision of Pacific Resources for Education and Learning services, and additional research.

## THE THREE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The detailed research questions guiding this study focused on the methods used to identify English language learners, the status of English language proficiency standards, and the status of aligned English language proficiency assessment (see box 2 and appendix A for details of the study questions and methods).

### What methods are used to identify English language learners?

Although English is used as a language of instruction in schools across the Pacific Region, each jurisdiction has an official language or languages other than English. The first language in each jurisdiction—the language of the home, community, church, and playground—is usually a local language.



## BOX 2

**How the study was conducted**

This study gathered information on the status of English language proficiency standards and aligned assessments across the service area of the Pacific Region. Specifically, it examined:

1. How English language learners are identified in each jurisdiction, whether any of the jurisdictions are not planning to identify English language learners, and if not, why not.
2. What stage of completion of English language proficiency

standards each jurisdiction has reached, whether any jurisdictions are not planning to develop English language proficiency standards, and if not, why not.

3. What forms of English language proficiency assessments are in place across the jurisdictions, and whether the assessment items align with standards.

To gather information about the English language proficiency standards and aligned assessments and about future plans for these standards and assessments, the researchers surveyed all entities within Pacific Region service region (American Samoa, Guam,

Hawai‘i, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia [Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap], Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Republic of Palau). Quantitative data were gathered by searching online sources of the ministries of education and departments of education throughout the Pacific Region. Qualitative data were gathered through personal interviews with key English language proficiency personnel and from a brief email survey of specific Pacific Resources for Education and Learning contacts from the jurisdictions. A document review committee made up of regional English language proficiency experts also contributed to the study.

Children often do not receive sustained exposure to English until they begin formal schooling.

Several other factors also have implications for English language proficiency in the Pacific Region jurisdictions:

- The Pacific languages are primarily oral, and written discourse in these languages is still evolving.
- In many cases, teachers in Pacific Region classrooms are themselves English language learners. For these educators, the challenge is not simply to translate lessons from their language into English but to acquire an entirely new set of skills in a new language.
- Many schools have severely limited access to culturally appropriate instructional materials and to highly qualified teachers (competent in the subject matter, credentialed, experienced, and proficient in English).
- Various jurisdictions are held to differing levels of compliance with No Child Left Behind.

For these and other reasons each jurisdiction implements different education policies to identify English language learners, develop English language proficiency standards and instructional practices, and implement English language proficiency assessments.

The principal method used to identify English language learners is a home-language survey. This method is used in American Samoa, Guam, Hawai‘i, and the Northern Mariana Islands. Hawai‘i administers the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) Links™ (CTB/McGraw-Hill, 2005) to students identified through responses to the home-language survey to determine limited English proficiency status. The Northern Mariana Islands also uses student ethnicity data to identify English language learners, while American Samoa also uses the Stanford Achievement Test (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., 9th ed., 1997, and 10th ed., 2004), identifying students who score below the 40th percentile as having limited English proficiency.

The number of students identified as English language learners is greatly influenced by the

method of identification. For example, students may be incorrectly identified as English language learners because they do not perform well on test items that are contextually inappropriate. Also, a student's ethnicity may not reflect the language or languages that the student uses outside of school or the student's English language proficiency level.

Most jurisdictions in the Pacific Region do not have a formal mechanism to identify English language learners. In the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau the dominant language is not English, and English language learners are not considered a subgroup of the student population. Table 1 shows the approximate percentage of English language learners in each jurisdiction.

#### What stage of completion of English language proficiency standards has each jurisdiction reached?

Only Hawai'i has completely developed English language proficiency standards (pending approval by the state governing body). American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands are developing English language proficiency standards aligned with language arts standards. Although none of the other jurisdictions has English language proficiency standards, all jurisdictions have language arts standards at either the state or national (Federated States of Micronesia) level.

Across jurisdictions, standards development is at various stages. Overall, the jurisdictions have prioritized language arts standards over English language proficiency standards. In American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, and the Northern Mariana Islands the language arts standards pertain to English only. In the freely associated states the language arts standards incorporate English and the local languages. The difference between language arts and language proficiency standards is that language arts do not typically address the stages of language development, nor do they include all of the domains of language proficiency (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and comprehension).

This section summarizes the state of standards preparation in each of the Pacific Region jurisdictions.

*American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.* American Samoa, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands have developed language arts content standards by grade level and are developing English language proficiency standards. American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands have involved teachers and central office personnel in developing standards and standards-based assessments. These jurisdictions are using a similar process to develop English language proficiency standards aligned with language arts standards.

TABLE 1

#### Percentage of English language learners in total student population in Pacific Region jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	Less than 20 percent	20–80 percent	More than 80 percent
Hawai'i	✓		
Guam		✓	
American Samoa			✓
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands			✓
Republic of the Marshall Islands			✓
Federated States of Micronesia			✓
Republic of Palau			✓

Source: Hawai'i Department of Education (2006); Guam Public School System (2005); Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, American Samoa Department of Education (2007), personal communication; Associate Commissioner of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (2007), personal communication; and Director of Territories and Freely Associated States Educational Grant Program, Freely Associated States (2007), personal communication.

*Hawai‘i.* Hawai‘i has just approved the third iteration of the Hawai‘i State Content and Performance Standards. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, mandated implementation of the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act programmatically. Accordingly, the Hawai‘i performance goal for limited English proficiency students and English language learners states that all limited English proficiency students “will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading/language arts and mathematics.” That goal guides teachers of all limited English proficiency students and English language learners in public education in Hawai‘i.

In school year 2004/05 Hawai‘i undertook development of Hawai‘i English Language Proficiency standards for grades K–12. These are fully developed and are pending approval by the state governing body. The standards are being implemented at the school level with continuing alignment with academic content standards in math, science, and other subject areas.

*The Marshall Islands and Palau.* Both the Marshall Islands and Palau have developed standards for core academic content areas, including English language arts. However, neither jurisdiction has English language proficiency standards. The Marshall Islands has requested assistance in developing English language proficiency standards. The Palau Ministry of Education has not decided whether to develop English language proficiency standards but envisions needing assistance and support if it does decide to do so. Based on student performance on English language arts assessments, there is growing support for English language proficiency standards in Palau.

*Federated States of Micronesia.* English language proficiency standards have not been developed at either the state or national level in the Federated States of Micronesia. Content standards for language arts are at various stages in the states.

Kosrae and Pohnpei have developed standards for core academic content areas, including English language arts. Chuuk has developed performance expectations for language arts. Yap and Kosrae have requested assistance in developing English language proficiency standards. Kosrae would also like to develop Kosraean language proficiency standards. The Federated States of Micronesia national government has content standards for language arts, mathematics, and health and nutrition.

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### What forms of English language proficiency assessment are in place?

American Samoa, Guam, Hawai‘i, and the Northern Mariana Islands have used or are using commercially developed tests to assess English language proficiency. These tests are neither contextualized to the Pacific Region jurisdictions nor aligned with local standards. The other jurisdictions do not have a formal mechanism to assess English language proficiency.

Jurisdictions that have used commercially developed English language proficiency assessments to identify English language learners or measure English language proficiency have expressed dissatisfaction with these instruments and the resulting data. Their objections include contextually inappropriate items, expense, difficulty with implementation, and difficulty with scoring.

Most of the jurisdictions have language arts assessments based on language arts standards at the state or national level. While it is often assumed that language arts assessments measure English language proficiency, language arts assessments do not typically measure language development or all of the domains of language proficiency.

*American Samoa.* In the past year schools in American Samoa piloted two commercial English

**Jurisdictions that have used commercially developed English language proficiency assessments have expressed dissatisfaction with these instruments**

language proficiency assessments, the LAS Links™ and the Stanford English Language Proficiency Test (Stanford ELP) (Harcourt Assessment, Inc., 2005). The American Samoa Department of Education has not yet decided whether to purchase one of these instruments or to develop its own English language proficiency assessment based on the school system's English language proficiency standards. As the standards and benchmarks are still being developed, neither the LAS Links™ nor the Stanford ELP can align with the standards. The American Samoa Department of Education is a partner in the Enhanced Assessment Grant, which focuses on developing standards-based English language proficiency assessments.

*Guam.* Guam developed and implemented the Language Other Than English program (recently renamed the English as a Second Language, ESL, program) to identify, assess, and provide age-appropriate education services to all students who are not proficient in English. English language learners are initially identified by home language use. ESL teachers use LAS measures appropriate to content area and age to assess students' English language proficiency.<sup>1</sup>

Although these off-the-shelf assessments (LAS) are not aligned with Guam Public School System English language proficiency standards, Guam plans to continue to move forward in addressing effective accountability systems, including the development of English language proficiency standards and aligned assessments. The Guam Public School System is also a partner in the Enhanced Assessment Grant for developing standards-based

English language proficiency assessments.

*Hawai'i.* A grade-appropriate version of the LAS Links™ is used to assess students' English language proficiency.<sup>2</sup> The LAS Links™ is aligned with Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages standards. To meet the Title III requirements of the No Child Left

Behind Act of 2001, Hawai'i is expected to implement an assessment that is more closely aligned to the Hawai'i English Language Proficiency standards. The state Department of Education is a partner in the Enhanced Assessment Grant focused on developing standards-based English language proficiency assessments.

*The Northern Mariana Islands.* No English language proficiency assessment is yet available, although the need for an English language proficiency assessment has been identified, and the Northern Mariana Islands plans to develop or adopt English language proficiency assessment instruments that are aligned with the new English language proficiency standards. The Northern Mariana Islands Public School System is also a partner in the Enhanced Assessment Grant for developing standards-based English language proficiency assessments.

*The freely associated states.* None of the entities in the freely associated states has developed or selected English language proficiency assessments. Palau and the Marshall Islands have implemented language arts assessments. All of the entities in the Federated States of Micronesia administer the national assessments for language arts. Pohnpei was developing standards-based assessments for reading to be implemented beginning in spring 2007. Kosrae implements assessments for language arts and Kosraean, as well as a high school entrance exam.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

Based on the findings on the status of English language proficiency standards and assessments across the Pacific Region, several recommendations can be made to improve the development of services and programs.

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### Develop clear language development policies

Hawai'i is the only jurisdiction in the Pacific Region required to comply with the No Child Left

**Hawai'i is the only jurisdiction in the region required to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act; the other jurisdictions negotiate the aspects of the law for which they will be held accountable**

Behind Act. For the other jurisdictions compliance is voluntary, and each negotiates the aspects of the law for which it will be accountable, including English language learner identification and English language proficiency assessment. Rather than approaching English language learner programs from the perspective of compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act, it might be better to identify the aspects of an integrated language development program that are appropriate to each jurisdiction.

A language development policy might include both students' first language and English. The first step is to establish language proficiency levels and standards. While the number of proficiency levels and standards may vary, the standards should address all students (all grades and proficiency levels) in the domains of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and comprehension. Once language proficiency standards are in place, assessment may be used at the beginning of the school year to identify and place students, during the year to guide instruction, and at the end of the year to measure progress. A well researched and systematic approach to language development is needed to guide standards, curriculum, and assessment of both the first language and English.

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### Review content standards

The Pacific Region jurisdictions have prioritized the development of academic content standards for core subject areas (language arts, math, science) before English language proficiency standards. Only Hawai'i has completely developed English language proficiency standards. Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) could facilitate the development of standards for core subject areas and English language proficiency for jurisdictions in the service area. It might also be helpful for jurisdictions to convene for a discussion on English language proficiency standards and on whether and how they are appropriate to their education systems. A peer review of existing standards would be useful to bring jurisdictions toward common ground. Although there are many differences in the Pacific Region, increased awareness and knowledge

of commonalities could improve English language learner policies and programs.

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### Collect student information

American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, and the Northern Mariana Islands use a home-language survey to identify English language learners. This type of survey may be useful for other jurisdictions that wish to identify languages spoken at home, including English. Having parents or guardians complete a survey at the time of student enrollment may also facilitate the collection of demographic data for developing accountability systems. Information about student demographics facilitates the disaggregation of student data by characteristics such as ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status; thereby improving the ability to track the achievement of subgroups of the student population.

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### Develop programs to address the specific needs of English language learners

The process for identifying English language learners needs to vary according to the demographics of each jurisdiction. In Guam, Hawai'i, and the Northern Mariana Islands, for example, English language learners constitute a small subgroup of the population. These jurisdictions identify students as English language learners for targeting instruction and services. In a jurisdiction where all students speak a language other than English outside the school environment, however, it may not be appropriate to assess all students to qualify them as English language learners. What is important is to provide support and services for students according to their level of language proficiency.

**The process for identifying English language learners needs to vary according to the demographics of each jurisdiction**

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### Conduct research

Pacific Region jurisdictions that are currently using commercial English language proficiency tests have cited many problems with their

implementation. In addition to test design issues there is the added challenge of assessing large numbers of English language learners. Further research on ways to assess English language proficiency in large populations would be useful.

English is not the dominant language used in the community in most Pacific Region jurisdictions. In school systems in these jurisdictions language proficiency goals usually include the student's first language and English. Research focused on attributes and practices associated with successful bilingual programs would be of great value.

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### Provide professional development

Most of the jurisdictions are not assessing students' English language proficiency even though English language learners make up a large percentage of the population. To address the needs of English language learners in the classroom it would be helpful to have a professional development program for teachers on how to conduct formative assessments and how to address the needs of English language learners in the classroom. Since many teachers are English language learners themselves, additional English instruction with a focus on the acquisition and use of academic language might also be beneficial.

**Developing customized English language proficiency standards and assessments will improve data collection and interpretation and provide baseline data**

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### NEXT STEPS

The findings of this report offer support for the following activities to be undertaken by PREL in the coming months:

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#### Develop a Pacific assessment consortium

The English language proficiency assessments being used or piloted by American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, and the Northern Mariana Islands are readily available through commercial vendors, but these assessments have numerous limitations,

including their drains on budgets, time, and the capacity of local staff. These tests are not contextually appropriate or aligned with local standards, so they do not meet No Child Left Behind Title III requirements. Developing customized English language proficiency standards and assessments will improve data collection and interpretation and provide baseline data for more reliably establishing benchmark targets. The U.S. Department of Education has encouraged the jurisdictions to collaborate on the development of content standards and assessments.

The U.S. Department of Education awarded the Hawai'i Department of Education, PREL, and a consortium of three education agencies (the American Samoa Department of Education, the Guam Public School System, and the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System) an Enhanced Assessment Grant. The grant enables these agencies to develop a test-item bank and to test blueprints and other instruments to enable consortium members to design culturally appropriate English language proficiency assessments for students in grades K–12. Test items will be aligned with English language proficiency standards for each education agency. Information about the Pacific assessment consortium will be disseminated nationally and regionally.

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#### Conduct a randomized control trial of the Pacific-CHILD professional development program

A randomized control trial will be conducted of Pacific-CHILD (Communities with High Standards in Literacy Development). This professional development program is designed to upgrade the knowledge and skills of fourth- and fifth-grade teachers in reading comprehension, resulting in improved classroom practices and, therefore, higher student achievement.

The focus of the Pacific-CHILD study is on three reading components: vocabulary, question generation, and text structure. In addition, there are three instruction strategies: differentiated instruction, interactive tasks, and creation of a cognitively

rich environment. The target population is fourth- and fifth-grade students, particularly English language learners.

PREL staff will provide professional development for two years to teachers participating in the study. Training will include a two-week annual institute in the summer; three mini-institutes in the fall, winter, and spring; two in-class observations per month; monthly demonstration lessons by PREL staff; and weekly structured learning team meetings with PREL staff joining the meetings twice each month.

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## NOTES

1. The assessment instruments used by the department's ESL teachers to determine the level of a student's English language proficiency include the following: Pre-LAS Oral (given to students ages 4–6), LAS Oral I (given to students age 7 or older or in grades 2–5), LAS Oral II (given to students in grades 6–12), LAS Reading and Writing 1 (given to students in grades 2–3), LAS Reading and Writing 2 (given to students in grades 4–6), and LAS Reading and Writing 3 (given to students in grades 7–12).
2. External validation of the LAS Links has been conducted, and results are available in the CTB McGraw Hill technical manual.

## APPENDIX A

### STUDY QUESTIONS AND DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

The overarching question guiding the study is this: What is the status of English language proficiency standards and aligned assessments across the Regional Education Laboratory (REL) Pacific service region? To address this larger question more specifically, four questions were identified in May 2006:

1. What portion of English language learner school-age children are being (will be) served in each jurisdiction K–12 across the curriculum?
2. What stage of completion of English language proficiency standards has each jurisdiction reached? Are any of the jurisdictions not planning to develop English language proficiency standards? If not, why not?
3. What forms of English language proficiency assessments are in place across the jurisdictions? Are they contextualized assessments? Do the English language proficiency assessment items align with standards?
4. Are English language proficiency standards being implemented? How is standards-based education being addressed and supported? What can we learn from jurisdictions that have implemented English language proficiency standards and assessments?

These questions were then revised in light of current English language proficiency program status. For example, because most jurisdictions do not collect data on the proportion of English language learners being served, a question was added on how English language learners are identified. In addition, question 4 was eliminated because conversations with key personnel in each jurisdiction made it clear that none of the jurisdictions has formally adopted English language proficiency standards, although Hawai‘i has developed standards and is awaiting approval by the state governing board.

The revisions resulted in the following questions:

1. How are English language learners identified in each jurisdiction? Are any of the jurisdictions not planning to identify English language learners as a subgroup? If not, why not?
2. What stage of completion of English language proficiency standards has each jurisdiction reached? Are any of the jurisdictions not planning to develop English language proficiency standards? If not, why not?
3. What forms of English language proficiency assessments are in place across the jurisdictions? Are they contextualized assessments? Do the English language proficiency assessment items align with standards?

#### Data collection

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from various sources at the ministries and departments of education. Quantitative data for English language learners were collected from Hawai‘i Department of Education web sites (Hawai‘i Department of Education, 2007a; 2007b) and the Guam Public School System web site (Guam Public School System, 2007), including data on the number and percentage of English language learners by grade.

Data for English language learners were not available online for American Samoa, Chuuk, Kosrae, the Marshall Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, Palau, Pohnpei, or Yap. English language learner data for these sites were collected by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning (PREL) staff for use in particular programs or proposals. These data have been reported in articles in *Pacific Educator* (PREL’s semiannual magazine) and in grant applications, such as the Enhanced Assessment Grant proposal and the current REL-Pacific proposal, both submitted to the U.S. Department of Education. Several sources provided the data used in this report for these jurisdictions: Broekhuizen (2002, 2004); Brown (2002, 2003);



Cummings (2005); Donahue (1997); Laturno (2001, 2002); Lee & Donahue (1998); Pablo & Koki (1999); Rao (2005); and Taitague (2006).

Qualitative data on standards and assessments were collected through a survey (see appendix B) administered through face-to-face interviews (three) or by email (five). In total, 11 respondents were contacted for interviews. The face-to-face interviews were conducted with education professionals from American Samoa, Chuuk, and Pohnpei who are currently employees of PREL. Two interviewees are working in the PREL office on a year-long assignment as language arts specialists, and the third interviewee is a full-time PREL employee from Pohnpei who has many years of experience as a program specialist. Each interviewee had in-depth knowledge of English language learner practices in his or her education agency.

The five respondents who returned the survey by email were from the following jurisdictions: American Samoa, Guam, Kosrae, Marshall Islands, and Palau. No interviews or surveys were received from the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia's national jurisdiction, or Yap. In total, therefore, 8 of the 11 jurisdictions (73 percent) provided information on the questions addressed in this English language proficiency status report.

Three regional reviewers were contacted to comment on the English language proficiency status report. These reviewers, from American Samoa, Guam, and Hawai'i, are experts in English language proficiency issues in their respective jurisdictions. Their input has been included throughout this report, including the final recommendations.

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### Study population

The REL Pacific service region comprises 10 jurisdictions and the national government of the Federated States of Micronesia. The jurisdictions include American Samoa, Guam, Hawai'i, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and

Yap), the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

The jurisdictions are affiliated with the U.S. government in three different ways: state (Hawai'i), territory (American Samoa, Guam, and Northern Mariana Islands), and freely associated state (the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau). Across these jurisdictions, language policies and practices and compliance with No Child Left Behind vary greatly.

*Language policies and practices.* The Pacific Region jurisdictions have unique policies and practices for English instruction. For example, in Guam, Hawai'i, and the Northern Mariana Islands, English is the primary language of instruction for students K–12, and English as a second language programs are in place for English language learners. Heritage language programs exist for Carolinian (Guam and Northern Mariana Islands), Chamorro (Guam and Northern Mariana Islands), and Hawaiian (Hawai'i). Instruction in American Samoa is in English for all subjects except Samoan language arts, when students in the elementary grades are provided 45 minutes of Samoan language each day. In the Marshall Islands Marshallese is the language of instruction for grades 1–3, and then students are transitioned to English. Marshallese is maintained as the language of instruction for 60 minutes each day in grades 4–12. In Palau a developmental bilingual program is in place; Palauan is the language of instruction for grades 1–8. Students are transitioned to English in the higher grades. Palauan language and cultural studies are maintained in the higher grades (9–12) for 45 minutes each day. Some jurisdictions implement transitional bilingual programs to enhance learning. For example, in Chuuk schools Chuukese is the language of instruction until grade 4, when students are transitioned to English.

English language learners in the Pacific Region jurisdictions may be grouped based on their English language exposure and usage. Students with the highest level of exposure to English, such as those in Hawai'i, constitute category 1. Category 2

TABLE A1

**Compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001**

Jurisdiction	Mandatory compliance (tier 1)	Negotiated with U.S. Department of Education (tier 2)	Negotiated with U.S. Department of the Interior (tier 3)
Hawai'i	✓		
American Samoa		✓	
Guam		✓	
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands		✓	
Republic of Palau		✓	
Republic of the Marshall Islands			✓
Federated States of Micronesia			
Chuuk			✓
Kosrae			✓
Pohnpei			✓
Yap			✓

Source: Hawai'i Department of Education (2006); Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, American Samoa Department of Education (2007), personal communication; Guam Public School System (2005); Associate Commissioner of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (2007), personal communication; and Director of Territories and Freely Associated States Educational Grant Program, Freely Associated States (2007), personal communication.

describes students with a high level of exposure to English due to government, business, and social interactions that demand more use of English. Students in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands are in this category. Category 3 represents students with the least exposure to English. Nearly all English language learners in category 3 speak a language other than English at home and in their communities but learn English at school. Students in American Samoa, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau are in category 3.

*Compliance with No Child Left Behind.* Compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 in the Pacific Region falls into three tiers of responsibility (table A1). Hawai'i, the only state, is in tier 1 and is held accountable for all provisions of the

act. The territories and Palau are in tier 2. Through a consolidated grant process with the U.S. Department of Education, these jurisdictions individually negotiate the provisions of the act for which they will be held accountable. The Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap) make up tier 3. These jurisdictions are not held accountable under No Child Left Behind. Rather, they receive compact funds administered by the Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs (OIA), to which they are held accountable for 20 indicators of educational progress. The OIA also encourages the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia to adopt some concepts from No Child Left Behind (such as standards and benchmarks, aligned curriculum and instruction, and assessment systems that measure standards and benchmarks).

**APPENDIX B  
STATUS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
PROFICIENCY (ELP) STANDARDS AND  
ASSESSMENT: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Please answer the following questions:

1. What is the status of ELP standards in your school system? (please check one)
  - We do not plan to develop ELP standards
  - We are planning to develop ELP standards
  - We are currently developing ELP standards
  - We have developed ELP standards
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Do you need any assistance developing your ELP standards?  Yes  No

If yes, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the status of ELP assessment in your school system? (please check one)
  - We do not plan to assess ELP
  - We are planning to develop ELP assessments
  - We are currently developing ELP assessments
  - We are using these tests to assess ELP:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Do you need any assistance developing ELP assessments?  Yes  No

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