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ABSTRACT

This study provides a profile of variables related to the status of students at risk of failure in public high schools in American Samoa during the 1993-94 school year. It is part of a larger study looking at high schools in some of the 10 American-affiliated Pacific political entities. In American Samoa, data were collected from 50 student records and interviews with 62 students (30 at-risk and 32 not at-risk), 40 families, 5 school principals, 48 teachers, and 19 community leaders. Because of the small sample size in American Samoa, many of the variables expected to affect at-risk status could not be analyzed through statistical means. Variables that appeared to be related to students' at-risk status based on response frequencies included: (1) previous academic performance; (2) language spoken in the home; (3) school attitude and behavioral problems; (4) absenteeism; (5) emotional abuse and neglect; (6) comments made about school at home; (7) alcohol abuse; (8) family relationships; (9) family configuration; (10) family responsibilities; (11) language of instruction; (12) teachers' years of experience; and (13) tutoring services. Recommendations include: (1) schools, parents, and communities must work together to demonstrate the value of education and the benefits of strong study habits and school learning; (2) they must also collaborate to provide counseling services to students and their families, improve the quality of instruction through staff development, and increase parent involvement in the educational process; and (3) schools must work to resolve high absenteeism and improve its recordkeeping systems in order to provide students with a comprehensive and effective educational program. (Contains 18 tables.) (SLD)

A Study of Risk Factors Among High School Students in American Samoa

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Preface

This report represents, not an end-product resulting from a simple research project, but a significant milestone in an ongoing process. The development of the PREL R&D Cadre as an integrated data collection and analysis group for the region and each entity is a result of this process and a force for research in the future. As part of this investigation, a vast amount of data was collected to study risk factors affecting high school students in the region (see the appendices). The data obtained were beyond the scope of this report. As such, it was not possible to analyze all the data. Therefore, contents of this report should be viewed only as a preliminary investigation of risk factors.

The report's primary intent is to provide a base that Cadre members can use to present preliminary study results to their colleagues and communities throughout the region. Feedback from these presentations will assist the R&D Cadre and PREL in structuring future research into the important characteristics of risk.

PREL intends to maintain the at-risk data base for future analyses and development. Future analyses may address in-depth considerations of alternative definitions of risk, multiple correlation of risk factor analysis, and interviews with former respondents concerning their interpretation of the results.

Executive Summary

Purposes of the Study

Purposes of this study are to:

- Provide a profile of variables related to the status of students at risk of failure in public high schools in American Samoa.
- Provide opportunities for collaborative research among the entities' departments of education.

Methodology

Representatives from each of the 10 American-affiliated Pacific entities planned and conducted the study. Data were collected from public high schools in the 10 entities served by PREL: American Samoa, Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap), Guam, Hawai'i, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and Republic of Palau. Data were collected during the spring semester of the 1993-94 school year. This report presents a subset of the regional study, specifically American Samoa.

The following definition of at-risk students was used for this study:

> "An at-risk student is one who is in danger of failing to complete his or her education with adequate academic skills, knowledge, and attitudes to function as a responsible citizen of his or her community."

Students who failed one or more courses in the fall semester of the 1993-94 school year and were in grades 9-12 of a public high school in American Samoa were identified as being at risk and selected for the study.

Results in American Samoa

Because of the small sample size in American Samoa, many of the variables could not be analyzed through statistical methods. However, variables that appear to be related to students' at-risk status based on response frequencies are discussed in the report. Among these variables were previous academic performance, language spoken in the home, school attitude and behavioral problems, absenteeism, emotional abuse/neglect, comments made about school at home, alcohol abuse, quality of family relationship, family configuration, family responsibilities, language of instruction, years of teaching experience, and tutoring services.

In general, both academic and personal aspects of schooling were found to be related to the at-riskness of high school students in American Samoa.

Conclusions/Recommendations

To address critical issues of high school students at risk in American Samoa, schools, parents, and communities must work together to demonstrate the value of education and the benefits of strong study habits and school learning. They must collaborate to provide counseling services to students and their families, improve the quality of instruction through staff development, and increase parent involvement in the educational process. In addition, school must work to resolve high absenteeism and improve its record keeping systems in order to provide students with a comprehensive and effective educational program.

I. Introduction

Concern for at-risk youth is increasing throughout the Pacific region. The Pacific Region Educational Laboratory (PREL) Study of Risk Factors among High School Students in the Pacific region, with entity-level studies in Chuuk and Kosrae states, American Samoa, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands is designed to identify the factors that affect at-risk high school students in the Pacific, promote an awareness and understanding of these students, and offer approaches to improving their education.

PREL serves 10 Pacific region entities—American Samoa; Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the Federated States of Micronesia comprised of the states of Chuuk, Kosrae, Pohnpei, and Yap; Guam; Hawai'i; the Republic of the Marshall Islands; and the Republic of Palau. These entities are diverse in their student population in terms of demographic variables including ethnicity, language, migration, and gender. The school systems serving these students vary in their abilities to accommodate all of the high school age population, maintain accurate student records, provide certified teachers, provide extensive course offerings, and promote opportunities for community and parent involvement. The composition of homes and families ranges from extended families to single parent households. Community expectations of appropriate roles for students, teachers, and parents vary with cultural contexts.

American Samoa is located in the mid-south Pacific, 2,600 miles from Honolulu. The islands are home to a population of 54,089 people (est. 1995), in an area of 70 square miles. Most of its population lives on the island of Tutuila. American Samoa is an unincorporated territory of the United States, and its citizens are U.S. nationals. As such, they are able to freely enter the Mainland United States and stay for any period of time. An estimated 65,000 Samoans have migrated to the West Coast and approximately 20,000 Samoans live in Hawai'i. The median income is $15,979 and the median age is 20.9. There are 33 public schools with a total of 14,375 students and 846 teachers in American Samoa (1994).

Because the region is so diverse, a simple study of a limited number of variables was deemed impractical. Instead, it was decided to conduct an extensive study of variables related to student success and failure in the public high schools of the U.S. affiliated Pacific region.

The study places a strong emphasis on looking at the child from a holistic point of view. The researchers are well aware that an individual's success, especially in the Pacific region, is not measured by academic success alone, but also involves the many facets of personal development directly and indirectly related to the influence of formal and informal education, the surrounding environment and the milieu of the time. Therefore, it should be pointed out that, although a definition of a student at risk is provided for research purposes, this is not to be taken as a definition of a student at risk in all aspects of life. Nevertheless, because formal education is valued in the Pacific region, this definition of at-riskness surely plays a part in the success or failure by youths in the region. Keeping this in mind, this study was undertaken to identify factors comprising the profile of a child who needs extra help and attention from parents, educators, and administrators to reach his/her fullest potential as a contributing member of society.

The study was conducted over a period of three years by the PREL Research & Development (R&D) Cadre, which is composed of one representative from each of the 10 entities' departments of education, two representatives of postsecondary institutions in the region, one private school representative, and a representative from the national government of the Federated States of Micronesia. Local support was provided during data collection by the local R&D support group, numerous school coun-

selors, central office staff, principals, teachers and educational administrators.

This report provides a review of the literature, presents research questions, describes the methods used in conducting the study, presents the framework for analysis and results for American Samoa, and discusses recommendations. Suggested uses of the report, ideas for further research, references, and appendices of the instruments used in the study are included in the regional report. The regional report is available from the Pacific Region Educational Laboratory, 828 Fort Street Mall, Suite 500, Honolulu, Hawai'i, 96813.

II. Review of the Literature

The R&D Cadre reviewed the literature to: (1) define at-riskness, and (2) identify in other studies variables that are related to students' at-risk status.

As elsewhere, some students in the Pacific region are not experiencing success in school. The National Goals for Education (1990) say, "Educators must be given greater flexibility to devise challenging and inspiring strategies to serve the needs of a diverse body of students. This is especially important for students who are at risk of academic failure—for the failure of these students will become the failure of our nation." This goal is consistent with the belief that schools can make a difference. The need for new strategies is also consistent with the primary reasons cited by school dropouts in 1992—not liking school, failing school, and feeling unable to keep up with schoolwork (Gronlund, 1993).

Definition of At-Risk Students

In conducting the review of the research, the first step was to agree on a definition of "at-risk students." The term "at risk" was viewed as a descriptive term referring to the total educational context in which students operate, rather than a negative reflection of the students.

A great deal of information about "at-risk" students is presented in the educational literature, beginning with the traditional approach of studying student dropouts (Wehlage & Rutter, 1986; Castello & Young, 1988; Natriello, Pallas, & McDill, 1986) and alienated youth (Pellicano, 1987) and moving toward the more recent emphasis on changes in policy and practice that enhance students' chances to succeed (Hendrick, MacMillan, Balow, & Hough 1989). The earlier emphasis was on studying the correlates to dropouts—to focus on social decay as both the cause of alienation and the barrier preventing school success in dealing with the dropout. Institutions may rationalize the plight of dropouts in this way: it is not the school's fault that some students come from poor homes and community environments, and lack the motivation and academic talent to succeed; the schools are unable to solve these socioeconomic determinants and are, therefore, not responsible for the fact that a sizable portion of their clients find good reasons to leave school before graduation.

According to Presseisen (1988), the term "at risk" originated in a medical model in which it was used as part of the phrase "at risk of something." An example is a student at risk of dropping out of school. Another definition of a student "at risk" is one who is "in danger of failing to complete his/her education with an adequate level of skills" (Slavin & Madden, 1989). The term implies that there is a threatening condition surrounding these students and that the condition is not necessarily inherent in the students. This perspective allows for interventions to reduce some of the threat, and thereby increase the students' chances of avoiding the condition. Presseisen described groups often included in the "at-risk" category as ethnic minorities, male students, students of low socioeconomic status, and students suffering from various forms of stress or instability. He further indicated that these student groups seem to encompass a number of problems related to quality and appropriateness of educational services, meaninglessness of instruction, family and community instability, and academic and school distinctions.

Richard A. McCann (1988) provided four descriptors of at-risk students, including characteristics of the individual, environmental conditions, students' ability to meet educational standards, and students' behaviors indicating their inability to assume responsible adult roles. These descriptors focus on negative behaviors and conditions. McCann asserts that the outcome of ignoring these negative variables will be a citizenry of unproductive society members.

After reading these and other authors, the R&D Cadre agreed to the following definition of at-risk students:

> "An at-risk student is one who is in danger of failing to complete his or her education with adequate academic skills, knowledge, and attitudes to function as a responsible citizen of his or her community."

For purposes of identifying and selecting students for this study, an at-risk student is a student who failed course during the fall semester of the 1993-94 school year and was in grades 9-12 of a public high school in the Pacific region. This dependent variable was used in selecting of students for the study. A student's degree of at-riskness was related to the number of courses that student failed.

Variables Related to Students' At-Risk Status

Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, and Rock (1986) used the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) High School and Beyond database to look at "Who drops out of high school and why?" They found that the two background factors most strongly related to dropping out of school are socioeconomic status (SES) and race/ethnicity. Black-Americans and Hispanics were the ethnic groups identified in this study as potential dropouts. Other factors included single-parent families, large families, and living in the South (USA) or in a large city. Academic failure was consistently related to dropping out, and student dropouts have experienced dissatisfaction with school and have lower self-esteem.

In an earlier study, Rumberger (1983) identified factors leading to students' decisions to drop out of school. The purpose of the study was to see how family background relates to dropping out of school for students of different ethnic groups and gender. The results showed that students from low SES were more likely to drop out than those of high SES. Young women were highly influenced by their mother's education level and males by their father's education level. At the time of the study, most females left school because of pregnancy or to marry; males left school to go to work. Family background factors, including parents' level of education and the social status of the family, were found be powerful predictors of dropping out. The author speculates that students from families with low social status may have a greater tendency to leave school to help support their families. Therefore, family background was found to be a significant factor in predicting dropping out of school.

Although these studies present a broad picture of factors related to at-risk youth, they may not address the specific population of the Pacific region. Many of the region's students would be considered ethnic minorities by U.S. Mainland standards, but are in the majority in their islands. When compared to U.S. standards, many would also be considered to be from lower income families. It should also be noted that the region's students are presently undergoing rapidly changing cultures. In an article relevant to the Pacific, Ainsley, Forman, and Sheret (1991) described a study of high school factors that influence students to remain in school in New South Wales, Australia. In addition to the effects of SES, gender, and being non-English first language speakers, they identified two other factors that influence students to remain in school—student's achievement level and student's perception of the quality of school life. This study also recommended investigating other school-related factors such as curriculum innovations, school organization, students' achievement, and students' attitude toward school.

In a study sponsored by the World Bank, Bruce Fuller investigated school factors that raise achievement in the Third World (1987). Fuller suggested that "school institutions exert a greater influence on achievement within developing countries compared to industrialized nations, after accounting for the effect of pupil background." His perspective for the review was to look at "how material ingredients are mobilized and organized within schools and classrooms." The school factors reviewed were school expenditures, specific material inputs, teacher quality, teaching practices, classroom organization, and school management. The two key issues raised were: (1) the greater influence of schools on student achievement in developing nations, and (2) how material inputs are "managed and what skills teachers draw upon to strengthen the social structure of the classroom."

For purposes of identifying factors for investigation in the R&D Cadre's study, the most informative work was Koki's study, "The Children and Youth At-Risk Effort in Hawai'i" (1987). Koki outlined academic, psychological, and social-behavioral indicators of at-risk students in Hawai'i. Hawai'i's at-risk students included those with limited English proficiency, underachievers, the intellectually limited, the economically disadvantaged, the malnourished, substance abusers, dropouts and potential dropouts, those retained for one or more years, pregnant teens or teens with children, those from unstable homes, the abused and neglected, the psychologically impaired, those who threaten or attempt suicide, juvenile delinquents, and the "silent ones" or withdrawn, alienated youth. The study reviewed a number of intervention programs aimed at students with these characteristics.

The review of the literature led to the identification of factors to be investigated in the PREL at-risk study. To account for the differences inherent in Pacific entities, and to identify factors most associated with at-riskness in public high school students, the Cadre focused on four broad domains: the student, home, school, and community. Selection of these domains arose from a model of student performance described by Alesia Montgomery and Robert Rossi (1993) who wrote, "A student's personal, home, community, and school characteristics should not be studied in isolation—all these variables contribute to student performance, and they are strongly interactive." This model encompasses the previously reviewed research from the U.S. mainland, Hawai'i, Australia, and developing nations.

The R&D Cadre adheres to the body of literature that is premised on the assumption that although non-school-based factors contribute to the success of students in school, schools can make a difference. Hendrick, MacMillan, Balow, and Hough (1989) provided a summary statement of this position. "Even though one cannot pinpoint the best intervention for a particular group of students, there are a number of general school strategies that have been shown to be successful in retaining students. Indeed, one characteristic of the literature on intervention strategies is that almost everything seems to work when enthusiastic and engaged principals and teachers become committed to a specific course of action."

The Cadre felt that research on at-risk factors identified for youth in American inner-cities, may not be relevant to Pacific communities. As a result, this study sought to identify and research variables specifically related to student success and failure in public high schools of the U.S. affiliated Pacific region. Through this study and the R&D Cadre's identification of the factors that place Pacific public high school students at risk, Pacific communities may unite and focus on reshaping roles and partnerships between schools, homes, and communities to provide enduring systemic change to better serve all of the students.

III. Research Questions

The primary research question to be addressed was:

What are the variables within the schools, homes, and communities that relate to students failing in the public schools of the Pacific region?

A related question to be considered was: *What areas should be targeted to better serve at-risk students in these schools?*

IV. Methodology

This regional research could not have been accomplished without the PREL R&D Cadre. This Cadre of 14 Pacific educators worked in collaboration with PREL staff to design the study, coordinate and implement plans at the local level, and participate in the analysis and completion of the final report. Each Cadre member was assisted in his/her own jurisdiction by a local R&D Support Group of teachers, counselors, principals, central office staff, and education administrators. Five PREL staff were assigned to collaborate on this effort.

The design work for this study was initiated in January 1993 at the PREL R&D Cadre Seminar, during which a plan of work and data collection instruments were drafted. From February to April 1993, the instruments were piloted in all entities during PREL staff site visits. In May through June 1993, PREL staff finalized the data collection instruments. From July through August 1993, PREL staff met with R&D Cadre members either on site or over PEACESAT teleconferences to get feedback and finalize procedures for collecting data. In September 1993, data collection was initiated by setting up sampling procedures in each entity and plans were finalized for data collection. On-site training in data collection procedures was conducted during the fall semester in all entities. These sessions were held to provide local R&D Support Group members in each entity with consistent training. Data collection began in January 1994 with student selection based on the Cadre's at-risk definition and student's academic performance in the previous semester. On-site support was provided by PREL during the spring semester to initiate data collection and to review and validate the data before submission of the data set. Data sets were submitted for data entry at a seminar in Honolulu in June 1994. Data were aggregated and entered into six databases. The R&D Cadre met in October 1994 to review preliminary analysis and to begin drafting the report. PREL staff continued the work with statistical analysis support. The R&D Cadre members were consulted throughout final report development.

Six instruments were developed for data collection. The first instrument was designed to gather data from students' school records, and included information on grades, absenteeism, length of enrollment in the school, discipline, attitude, and behavior. A second instrument, a student interview protocol, was designed to gather demographic information as well as students' perspectives on the quality of instructional services and school climate at their school. A third instrument was designed for parent interviews to gather information regarding family configuration, expectations for the student, and relationships with the school. A fourth instrument, a teacher interview protocol, focused on teachers' credentials and their opinions of the students targeted for the study. The fifth and sixth instruments were interview protocols for principals regarding school variables and their perceptions of the at-risk issue and community leaders regarding the social context of the students' daily lives outside of school.

In American Samoa, data were collected from 50 student records, 62 students, 40 families, 5 school principals, 48 teachers, and 19 community leaders. At-risk and not at-risk students were randomly selected at each grade level from public high schools in American Samoa. The data set included 30 at-risk students and 32 not at-risk students.

Table 1. Number of Respondents for Each Instrument in American Samoa

Entity	Records	Student Interview	Parent Interview	Teacher Interview	Principal Interview	Community
American Samoa	50	62	40	48	5	19

V. Framework for Analysis

The review of the literature suggested areas of analysis for this study. The analyses were grouped according to the four contexts identified in the design of the study—the student, the home, the school, and the community. Table 2 shows the placement of student, home, and school variables analyzed within this conceptual scheme.

The student was the unit of analysis in the study. Regional data were analyzed using chi-square analysis. Whenever an independent variable could be measured in ordinal or interval scale, analysis of variance was used. Because the sample size was small, many of the variables could not be analyzed through these statistical methods. Therefore, response frequencies for each variable were analyzed for trends indicating relationships with the at-risk status of students. Variables that appear to be educationally significant are discussed in the report.

Table 2. List of Student, Home, and School Variables

Contexts	Variables	Description of Variable
Student	1. Gender	Male/Female
	2. Language	Language spoken in the home
	3. Ethnicity	22 ethnic groups represented in the region
	4. "Foreignness"	Constructed variable including student's citizenship, ethnicity, length of stay in current residence, majority/ minority ethnic group in scho
	5. Previous academic performance	Number of courses failed in previous three semesters
	6. Homework	Time spent doing homework
	7. School attitude problems	As reported in school records
	8. Disciplined for attitude problems	Referred to the school office
	9. Behavioral problems	As reported in school records
	10. Disciplined for behavioral problems	Referred to the school office
	11. Absenteeism	As reported in school records
	12. Disciplined for attendance problems	Referred to the school office
	13. Comments about school made at home	Does student talk about school while at home?
	14. Emotional abuse/ neglect	Self-report of abuse, neglect and traumatic experiences
	15. Abuse of family member	Did student witness abuse of family member?
	16. Witness an accident	Did student witness an accident?
	17. Alcohol abuse	Self-report of alcohol abuse
	18. Substance abuse	Self-report of substance abuse
Home	19. Socioeconomic status	Household income computed according to entity average and including subsistence income
	20. Family configuration	Number of people in the household
	21. Quality of relationship with family	Self-report by parent about quality of relationship with student
	22. Family responsibilities	Family responsibilities which cause school absences
School	23. After school tutoring services	Do students receive school tutoring services?
	24. Language of instruction	Reported by teachers
	25. Class size	Ratio of students to teacher
	26. Teaching experience	Years of teaching experience
	27. Teachers who request training in at-risk teaching strategies	From teacher questionnaire
	28. Teachers who request more instructional materials	From teacher questionnaire

VI. Results

Variables found to be educationally significant for American Samoa, based on response frequencies, are discussed and compared to statistical results for the region.

As shown in Table 3, 15 of the 18 variables associated with the student context were significantly associated with at-risk students regionwide. Results in American Samoa were relatively consistent with these results with 12 of the 18 variables appearing to be related to the at-risk status of students.

Table 3. Results for Student Variables in the Region and in American Samoa

Student Variables	Statistically Related to At-Riskness in the Region	Response Frequencies Indicate a Relationship in American Samoa
1. Gender	No	Yes
2. Language	No	Yes
3. Ethnicity	No	No
4. "Foreignness"	Yes	No
5. Previous academic performance	Yes	Yes
6. Homework (amount of time spent)	Yes	No
7. School attitude problems	Yes	Yes
8. Disciplined for school attitude problems	Yes	Yes
9. Behavioral problems	Yes	Yes
10. Disciplined for behavioral problems in school	Yes	Yes
11. Absenteeism	Yes	Yes
12. Disciplined for attendance problems	Yes	Yes
13. Comments about school made at home	Yes	Yes
14. Emotional abuse/neglect	Yes	Yes
15. Abuse of family member	Yes	Yes
16. Witness an accident	Yes	No
17. Alcohol	Yes	Yes
18. Substance abuse	**	No

** = Small cell sizes preclude statistical testing.

Variables found to be statistically significant in the review of the National literature, but not in the regional study, were gender, language and ethnicity. In other words, although students were selected at random, gender was not significantly associated with at-risk status as defined in this study. Language also was not a significant variable, perhaps because the language of the home also was the primary language of the community at large, unlike the U.S. mainland

context with English-speaking majority in communities where the research was conducted. A similar explanation may be given for the lack of significance in ethnicity variable.

Similar findings were obtained in American Samoa for ethnicity. However, there appeared to be a strong relationship between language spoken in the home and a student's at-risk status. That is, more not at-risk students speak English or Samoan and English at home while their at-risk peers are more likely to speak Samoan. The gender variable also appeared to be related to at-risk status with a larger number of females in the not at-risk group. The response frequencies are presented in Table 3A.

Table 3A. Frequency Table for Student Variables 1-3

Student Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
1. Gender	Female=10 Male=20 Total=30	Female=16 Male=16 Total=32
2. Language spoken at home (Native = Samoan)	Native=21 English=3 Both=6 Total=30	Native=4 English=19 Both=9 Total=32
3. Ethnicity Ethnic minority in school. (yes or no)	Yes=2 No=28 Total=30	Yes=2 No=30 Total=32

Because an analysis of the ethnicity variable did not yield significant results, it was decided that in view of immigration patterns in the region a construct called "foreignness" should be investigated. Student "foreignness" was measured by citizenship, ethnicity, and whether the student had lived in the entity of current residence since birth, and the student's status as an ethnic minority or majority in school.

The relationship between "foreignness" and at-riskness was significant in the region, and showed that the "more foreign" a student, the less likely the student was to be at risk. There are several possible explanations for this finding. Moving to a new home may entail the search for a better life and, therefore, greater motivation to excel in school as a means of achieving success in the new location. Immigrants may also have different cultural values regarding education or different prior schooling experiences.

In American Samoa, however, the construct called "foreignness" did not have a relationship with students at risk. There is a relatively equal distribution of both at-risk and not at-risk students along the "foreignness" scale, with all students characterized on the scale as either one, least foreign, or two. Table 3B displays the data obtained in American Samoa for "Foreignness."

Table 3B. Frequency Table for Student Variable 4

Student Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
4. "Foreignness"	One=20	One=17
	Two=10	Two=15
One=least "foreign" and Five=most "foreign"	Three=0	Three=0
	Four=0	Four=0
	Five=0	Five=0
	Total=30	Total=32

A finding in the region consistent with National research was that records of a student's previous academic performance are a highly significant predictor of at-risk status. This also appeared to be true in American Samoa where, as Table 3C indicates, almost half of the at-risk students failed anywhere from one to five courses while their not at-risk peers failed none.

Table 3C. Frequency Table for Student Variable 5

Student Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
5. Previous Academic Performance	Zero=17	Zero=32
(Number of courses failed in	One=4	One=0
previous three semesters)	Two=4	Two=0
	Three=3	Three=0
	Four=1	Four=0
	Five=1	Five=0
	Total=30	Total=32

Another regional finding consistent with National research was that student perceptions about school as indicated by time spent doing homework, attitude and behavioral problems in school, and student absenteeism were significantly related to the at-risk status of students. The length of time spent doing homework was related to at-risk status and was used as an indication of a student's perception of the importance of the work and willingness to commit time to the assignments. Disciplinary action for attendance problems in the past, as shown in the school records, also was significantly associated with at-risk status. In addition, at-risk students had more reports of attitude and behavioral problems and instances of being disciplined for these problems at school.

The results for American Samoa, however, were not always consistent with the findings in the region. Time spent doing homework does not appear to be strongly related to at-risk students; however, as indicated in Table 3D, the trend among not at-risk students is "always completing" homework.

Table 3D. Frequency Table for Student Variable 6

Student Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
6. Homework (How often student does homework)	One=12	One=19
	Two=17	Two=12
One=always; Two=sometimes; Three=never	Three=1	Three=1
	Total=30	Total=32

School attitude and behavioral problem variables in American Samoa were consistent with the regional findings and appear to be related to students' at-risk status. As summarized in Table 3E, school records indicated a higher incidence of school attitude problems for at-risk students, and behavioral problems seem to indicate a particularly strong relationship with at-risk status.

Table 3E. Frequency Table for Student Variables 7-10

Student Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
7. School attitude problems	Yes=7	Yes=3
(according to school records)	No=23	No=29
	Total=30	Total=32
8. Disciplined for attitude problems	Yes=8	Yes=3
(referred to the office)	No=22	No=29Total=30
	Total=30	Total=30
9. Behavioral problems (according to school records)	Yes=14	Yes=2
	No=16	No=30
	Total=30	Total=32
10. Disciplined for behavioral problems (referred to the office)	Yes=12	Yes=3
	No=18	No=29
	Total=30	Total=32

Absenteeism, as indicated in school records, was also found to be clearly related to student at-risk status in American Samoa. School records indicated only 3 not at-risk students with attendance problems as compared to 21 of their at-risk peers. Attendance data are presented in Table 3F.

Table 3F. Frequency Table for Student Variables 11, 12

Student Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
11. Absenteeism (school records indicate an attendance problem)	Yes=21 No=9 Total=30	Yes=3 No=29 Total=32
12. Disciplined for attendance problems (referred to the office)	Yes=18 No=12 Total=30	Yes=1 No=31 Total=32

Another group of student variables investigated focused on the student's home and family. Larger numbers of not-at-risk students in the region and in American Samoa made comments about their school at home to their parents compared to at-risk students. This analysis did not focus on the type of comments (positive or negative). As indicated in Table 3G, more not at-risk students in American Samoa simply talked about school when they were at home.

Table 3G. Frequency Table for Student Variable 13

Student Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
13. Comments about school made at home	Yes=17 No=7 Total=24	Yes=25 No=2 Total=27

Personal problems and emotional stress were also found to be significantly related to the at-risk status of a students in the region, as in studies conducted elsewhere. Both in the region and in American Samoa, larger numbers of at-risk students experienced emotional abuse and neglect and lived with physical abuse by close relatives. Students in American Samoa also reported more instances of alcohol abuse than their not at-risk peers.

Regional data indicate that at-risk students also had witnessed more accidents and reported more substance abuse than not at-risk students; however, this was not the case in American Samoa where similar numbers of students reported experiencing these events. Table 3H provides frequency data for these variables.

Table 3H. Frequency Table for Student Variables 14-18

Student Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
14. Emotional abuse/neglect	Yes=3 No=27 Total=30	Yes=0 No=32 Total=32
15. Abuse of family member	Yes=5 No=25 Total=30	Yes=1 No=31 Total=32
16. Witness an accident	Yes=5 No=25 Total=30	Yes=4 No=28 Total=32
17. Alcohol abuse	Yes=7 No=23 Total=30	Yes=2 No=30 Total=32
18. Substance abuse	Yes=1 No=29 Total=30	Yes=1 No=30 Total=31

The second set of analyses focused on data from the home context. Table 4 shows results obtained for the variables associated with the home context in the region and in American Samoa. The results for American Samoa were consistent with regional findings.

Table 4. Results for Home Variables in the Region and in American Samoa

Home Variables	Related to At-Riskness in the Region	Response Frequencies Indicate a Relationship in American Samoa
19. Socioeconomic status	No	No
20. Family configuration	Yes	Yes
21. Quality of relationship with family	**	Yes
22. Family responsibilities	Yes	Yes

** = Small cell sizes preclude statistical testing.

Because of economic diversity among entities, socioeconomic status was investigated two different ways: cash income in a household and a combination of cash and subsistence income. Both of these income measures were equated across all entities using criteria agreed upon by the R&D Cadre regarding average income in each of the entities. Both analyses showed that family income as an indicator of a student's socioeconomic status was not related to at-risk status in the region or in American Samoa.

Family configuration in the region was significantly related to at-riskness. More at-risk students lived in large households of 10 or more while their not at-risk counterparts lived in smaller family units. Household size in American Samoa also seemed to be related to a student's at-risk status. As Table 4A indicates, although the majority of both at-risk and not at-risk students come from large families of 6 or more, 9 at-risk students reported living in households of 10 or more members, compared to only 2 of their not at-risk peers.

Table 4A. Frequency Table for Home Variables 19, 20

Home Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
19. Socioeconomic status	Very high=1 High=3 Average=2 Low=2 Very low=17 Total=25	Very high=2 High=4 Average=3 Low=5 Very low=13 Total=27
20. Family configuration (number of people living in the household) 1-5 people=One 6-10 people=Two over 10 people=Three	One=4 Two=12 Three=9 Total=25	One=5 Two=20 Three=2 Total=27

Family problems were analyzed using the reported quality of the relationship between parents and the student. Poor quality of relationship with parents was associated with at-risk students in the region and in American Samoa. In addition, more at-risk students in the region had family responsibilities that caused them to be absent from school. As reported in Table 4B, this trend in American Samoa is similar with more at-risk students reporting missing school because of family obligations than their not at-risk peers.

Table 4B. Frequency Table for Home Variables 21, 22

Home Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
21. Quality of relationship with family	Good=20 Fair=4 Poor=1 Total=25	Good=27 Fair=0 Poor=0 Total=0
22. Family responsibilities which cause absence from school	Yes=6 No=14 Total=20	Yes=3 No=19 Total=22

The third set of analyses focused on data from the school context. Table 5 shows the results obtained for school variables in the region and in American Samoa. Except for the years of teaching experience variable, the results for American Samoa were inconsistent with regional findings.

Table 5. Results for School Variables in the Region and in American Samoa.

School Variables	Related to At-Riskness in the Region	Response Frequencies Indicate a Relationship in American Samoa
23. After school Tutoring Services	No	Yes
24. Language of Instruction	No	Yes
25. Class size (student teacher ratio)	Yes	No
26. Teaching Experience	Yes	Yes
27. Teachers who request training in at-risk teaching strategies	Yes	No
28. Teachers who request more instructional materials	Yes	No

School tutoring services and the language of instruction were not significantly related to at-riskness in the region. Results in American Samoa, however, indicate at-risk students used after school tutoring less often than their not at-risk peers, and a clear relationship between at-riskness and language of instruction. Twice as many not at-risk students than at-risk students in American Samoa reported receiving instruction in English. Table 5A provides details on the responses.

Table 5A. Frequency Table for School Variables 23, 24

School Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
23. After school tutoring Services	Yes=13 No=15 Total=28	Yes=20 No=11 Total=31
24. Language of Instruction (Native = Samoan)	English=8 Native=21 Total=29	English=16 Native=14 Total=30

Class size and teachers' years of teaching experience were significantly related to at-riskness in the region. Results indicated that lower student/teacher ratios are actually associated with at-risk students, with relatively more at-risk students in smaller classes. These results may be attributed to grouping practices for at-risk students such as pull-out programs, and remediation or special education classes. However, there are more at-risk and non at-risk students in larger classes. Teachers' years of teaching experience yielded more predictable

results. More at-risk students were enrolled in classes taught by teachers with less than 15 years experience.

In American Samoa, there was a relatively even distribution of at-risk students for each class size. However, as the responses in Table 5B indicate, years of teaching experience appeared to be related to students' at-risk status. In general, more at-risk students received instruction from teachers with less than 15 years of experience.

Table 5B. Frequency Table for School Variables 25, 26

School Variables	At Risk	Not At Risk
25. Class size	One=8	One=3
	Two=6	Two=2
1-10=One	Three=3	Three=5
11-15=Two	Four=9	Four=16
16-20=Three	Five=3	Five=6
21-30=Four		
31 or over=Five	Total=29	Total=29
26. Teacher's years of experience	One=22	One=18
	Two=5	Two=14
1-15 years=One		
Over 16 years=Two	Total=27	Total=32

Also related to students' at-risk status in the region was the number of teachers who responded that their effectiveness at teaching at-risk students would be improved if they had access to more instructional materials and more staff development opportunities. The data from American Samoa, however, did not appear to yield any particular relationship for teachers who requested training or instructional materials. Table 5C illustrates the similarity in responses for teachers of at-risk and not at-risk students.

Table 5C. Frequency Table for School Variables 27, 28

School Variables	At-Risk	Not At-Risk
27. Do teachers request training in at-risk teaching strategies?	Yes=15	Yes=18
	No=14	No=14
	Total=29	Total=32
28. Do teachers request more instructional materials?	Yes=24	Yes=25
	No=5	No=7
	Total=29	Total=32

The fourth set of analyses focused on data describing the community context. The following results show a qualitative content analysis of open-ended questions asked of all teachers, parents, and at-risk and not at-risk students in American Samoa regarding their perceptions of variables contributing to success and failure in school. Responses reported in this report were provided by a clear majority of respondents and are listed from most to least frequent. Various other responses were tallied but were much less common than those reported here.

Students

When asked what causes them to do poorly in school, students in American Samoa said:

- Poor study habits, being unprepared.
- Low attendance, participation and motivation.
- Poor instruction by inexperienced and/or unprepared teachers.
- Fatigue.
- Other commitments or problems at home.
- Friends who are a bad influence.

When asked what would help them do better in school, students said:

- Applying more effort to school, homework, studying harder.
- Paying attention and following instructions.
- Improved attendance.
- Asking questions, seeking help from teachers and/or counselors.
- Better learning environment including improved materials, and facilities.
- Avoiding bad influences.

Students described the best teachers as those who:

- Are prepared and deliver clear instruction.
- Are willing to offer extra help.
- Develop positive teacher-student relationships.
- Are fair in their grading practices.
- Are consistently on time for work and work hard.

Students described the worst teachers as those who:

- Are negative, mean , lazy, show favoritism, shout at or ridicule students.
- Are unprepared and unable to explain the lessons clearly.
- Are unpredictable or inconsistent in their grading practices.
- Are often or consistently absent.
- Are not willing to help students.

Parents

Parents said the causes of student success in school performance are:

- Good effort, study habits, and attitude.
- Good attendance by the student.
- Family and teacher support.
- Honesty and obedience in class.
- Good teaching and learning environment.

Parents said the causes of student difficulties in school are the result of:

- Carelessness, laziness, poor attitude and poor study habits.
- Spending too much time with friends, distracted by bad influences.
- Poor attendance.
- Illness, family obligations.
- Inexperienced teachers.

When parents were asked what will help students succeed in school, they said:

- Support, guidance, and encouragement from family, peers, school staff and counselors.
- Applying more effort to their school work.
- Diligent, committed, competent teachers.
- Improved student attendance.
- Understanding the value of education for the future.
- Improved school environment, instructional materials, and curriculum.

Teachers

Teachers said that causes of student success are:

- Good study habits, hard work.
- Good attendance and participation.
- High motivation, good attitude.
- High level basic skills.
- Good English language skills.
- High self esteem.

Teachers said that causes of student failure are:

- Low motivation, laziness, and poor attitude.
- Poor study habits.
- Poor attendance and participation.
- Low level basic skills.
- Poor English language skills.
- No parental support or family problems.

The data were consistent in pointing to student effort as a primary variable in student success. Problems symptomatic of poor school performance seem to be related to poor attitudes, work habits, and attendance. Unique to American Samoa was the mention of English language skills as being an important factor in student success or failure. Students cited following instructions and seeking help from teachers or counselors as additional areas that would help them to succeed, while student complaints pointed to teachers' negative attitudes, unfairness in grading practices, and lack of teacher preparedness in class. Another finding focuses on the need for increased communication and support for the students from the school and the home, and the negative influence of friends was reported by both students and parents. A majority of the findings pointed to personal or behavioral problems as having a strong impact on students' at-risk status.

These results indicate the critical need to pay attention to the affective and academic components of the curriculum. Habits and attitudes in learning are as important as skill and knowledge development. The home, school, and community each play an integral role in conveying positive messages about school, as well as providing the support the student needs to succeed.

Summary of Results for American Samoa

The overall results of the study indicate that a large number of student, home, and school characteristics seem to be related to the at-risk status of students in American Samoa.

Student variables with cell sizes too small to be analyzed through statistical methods, but appeared to be related to students' at-risk status were:

- Language spoken in the home.
- Previous academic performance.
- School attitude and behavior problems.
- Absenteeism.
- Comments made about school at home.
- Emotional abuse/neglect.
- Abuse by a family member.
- Alcohol abuse.

Home variables that appeared to be related to students' at-risk status were:

- Family configuration.
- Quality of relationship with family.
- Family responsibilities which cause school absences.

School variables that appeared to be related to students' at-risk status were:

- Language of instruction.
- Years of teaching experience.
- Use of after school tutoring services.

In the data collection phase, the difficulty in accessing cumulative records for all students was noted throughout the region. An analysis of open-ended questions asked of students, parents, and teachers point to the need to address affective as well as academic issues of schooling, teacher and student absenteeism, teacher training and the quality of instruction, and the critical role of the interactions between students, teachers, parents, and the community.

The results of this study support some of the general findings of the research conducted elsewhere. Unique to the Pacific region may be some of the cultural and family characteristics that blend the family unit with the community,

increasing the influence of the quality of family and community life on education. In addition, gender, ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status were not found to be significantly related to at-riskness. These variables were investigated in research on the U.S. mainland with different definitions of gender role expectations, ethnic minorities, languages other than English in English-speaking settings, and SES in a commercial, cash-dependent economy. In the Pacific, these variables, which would define minority status in other contexts, do not indicate the same reality for Pacific islanders. However, the variable for language spoken in the home in American Samoa appeared to be related to students' at-risk status as it does in research conducted in English-speaking settings. It is therefore not surprising that teachers in American Samoa point to proficiency in English as being an important factor in student success.

VII. Recommendations

After analyzing the data, the R&D Cadre conducted a second review of the literature describing programs and initiatives related to issues of at-risk status in Pacific Schools. (A list of the studies and papers reviewed is appended to the regional report.) These articles were the basis for the Cadre's discussions and led to regional recommendations associated with student, home, and school variables. Refer to the regional report for a full discussion of regional recommendations. The recommendations that are most pertinent to American Samoa are:

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Student Variables

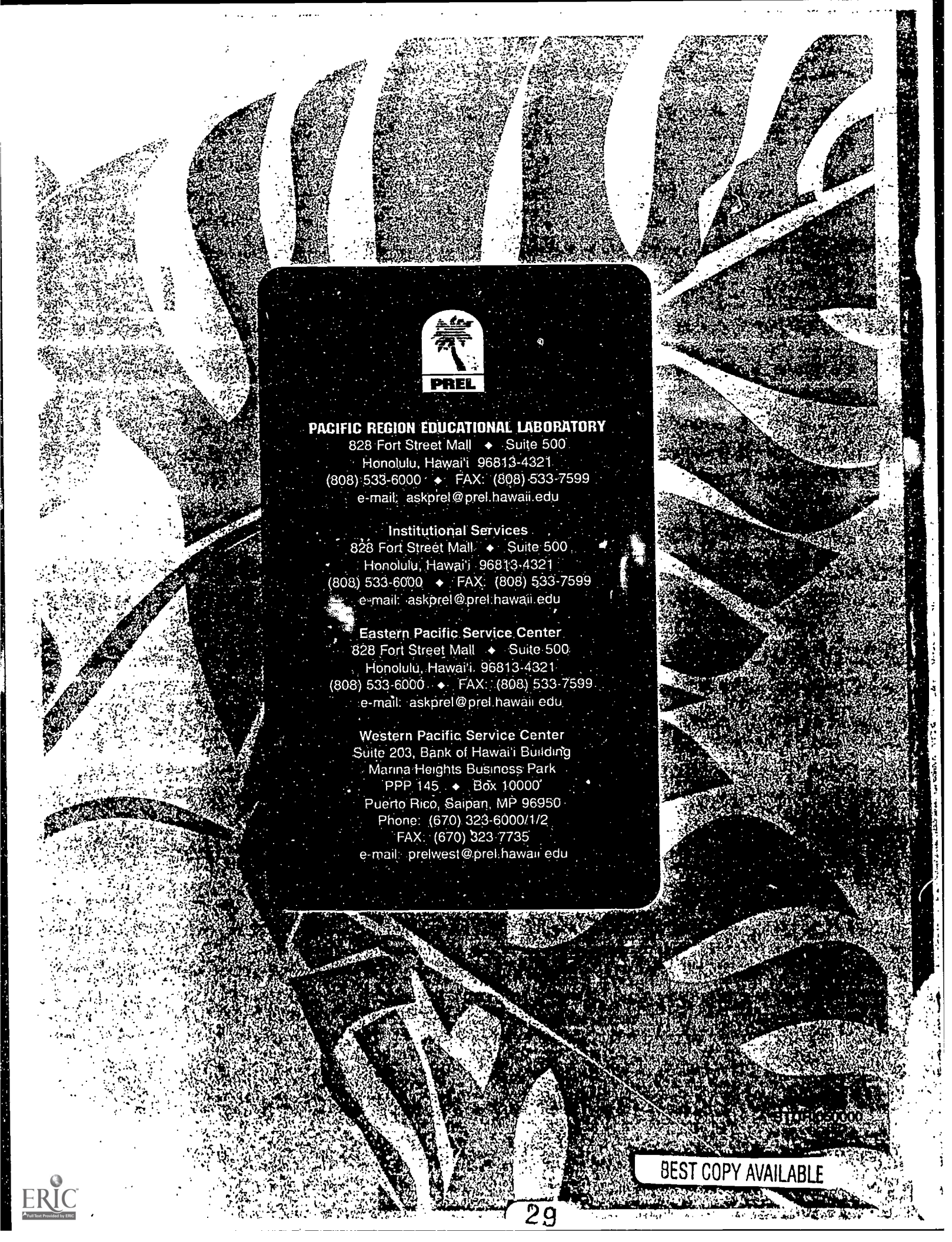
1. Offer academic, career, and college counseling, substance abuse prevention and counseling, and personal adjustment/life-skills support to all students. These services are critical because students, teachers, and parents in American Samoa cited low motivation, poor attitudes and personal problems as causal factors in failure. Attitude and behavioral problems at school and home and family-related problems such as emotional abuse, neglect, and alcohol abuse also appeared to be related to at-risk status and should be addressed through counseling and support.
2. Schools, communities, and parents should work together to give consistent messages about the value of education and the value of students as contributing members of the community. Students understand that improved study habits and attendance are key factors in their school success; however, negative outside influences, and family problems are constant challenges. The importance of family support cannot be overemphasized. Three home variables—family configuration, the quality of the student's relationship with their family and family responsibilities—looked strongly related to students' at-risk status in American Samoa.
3. Address absenteeism by both students and teachers. Students, teachers, and parents all cited attendance as a key factor in student success and failure, and there was a strong relationship between attendance and at-riskness.
4. Maintain and use student records to support students' learning and to provide a long-term view of student's academic, physical, emotional, or social experiences. Records can also be used to provide information about any awards or special recognition as well as needs for special support. The lack of these records creates a deficit of critical information that prevents the development of the most effective educational program for students who are experiencing difficulties at school as well as students who are already successful.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on School Variables

1. Acknowledge and increase teacher professionalism through staff development. Positive regard, caring, and commitment to the school and community must be modeled by teachers, administrators, parents, and community members in order for students to see the long-term value of their education and the role that education plays in Pacific island cultures and communities. Students must have the opportunity to work with teachers, administrators, and adults in the community who conduct themselves as role models.
2. Focus on improving the quality of instruction provided by schools and teachers, and make a commitment to improving conditions that promote learning. Demonstrate both the immediate and long-term benefits of education to students by making teaching and learning interesting, engaging, relevant, and effective. Teachers willing to offer additional lessons or support were cited by both students and parents as contributing to student success.

Recommendations Regarding Findings on Home Variables

1. Increase parent and family involvement. One interesting finding was that not at-risk students discuss school related issues in the home more than at-risk students. There is a need to influence and change the perception and attitude of students and parents that education is the school's responsibility alone. Support and outreach programs that involve families in the education of their children should be a focus for educational programming. School-family-community partnerships may be formed to address the critical areas identified by this research.
2. Families, educators, and communities must re-examine their roles and come together to view the learning and success of their students as a shared responsibility of the whole community. It has often been said, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." A student's self-esteem and motivation to learn do not begin and end at the door of the school. Community involvement will enhance student learning and enable students to begin to define their role as contributing citizens to the communities in which they live.



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