

## Monthly Events

From the left: JICA Micronesia Resident Representative, Naoyoshi Sasaki, GEAR UP Teachers, GEAR UP Program Director, Nora Krauzaitis, and JICA Technical Adviser, Takuichi Araki



For the past month, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the program- Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) held negotiations on potential cooperation between GEAR UP and JICA and how both programs can better benefit the local community and island youth. The potential partners found much common ground for cooperation. Since 1989 JICA has been dispatching volunteers in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), including volunteers to assist in training local teachers in mathematics for elementary schools. JICA math volunteers provide a rich source of knowledge and expertise in this field. After GEAR UP and JICA discussions, there was an understanding that both parties would cooperate in the field of education, especially on improving math standards in Pohnpei. Therefore, JICA kindly accepted 10 GEAR UP math teachers to participate in its organized Math Seminar June 7-9, 2011.

The JICA Math seminar gathered 58 participants: JICA Volunteers and Elementary School Teachers from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), and Palau. Eight GEAR UP math teachers were able to participate in the three day Math Seminar that presented educators with opportunities to share best practices and a forum to discuss the many challenges that the three countries face. JICA volunteers introduced the educators to the "Open Class" method. One of the RMI teachers conducted an "Open Math Class", in which a teacher instructed and the remaining participants-teachers observed and, later, discussed the effectiveness of math instruction delivery, including strengths and weaknesses. The teachers gained necessary skills in effective math instruction delivery techniques and strategies.

Such training addressed some of the biggest education challenges throughout the FSM that include the lack of effective instruction delivery skills and poor lesson planning. Since the main goal of GEAR UP Pohnpei is to increase the academic achievement of 410 GEAR UP students who are 7<sup>th</sup> graders this school year, the teacher performance is critical to students' academic achievement. If the GEAR UP program is to succeed, teachers' performance standards must be improved. Therefore, GEAR UP Pohnpei program will particularly focus on addressing teachers' training needs.



RMI Teacher conducts "Open class"

### Feedback from GEAR UP math teachers who participated in the Math Seminar:

**Arsenio Wilson:** "We discussed about different strategies that we can apply in teaching math so that we could address learning needs of all students. I found these activities very important and helpful to us, as teachers, as we deliver lessons for GEAR UP program classes."

**Johnnyber Hairens:** "I learned many methods that I can use in my class. I also learned how to find area of a circle by finding the area of a rectangle. I can't wait to get back to my class so I can start using these techniques."

**Pelma Agrippa:** "I very much enjoyed the presentation delivered by the math professor/JICA adviser from Japan. He gave very good advices on math teaching. He emphasized that it is very important for teachers to explain, experiment and to reason to students why certain things are as such so that teaching reaches each individual student."

**Dayson Talley:** "There were many interesting interactions and presentations in this workshop that I really found helpful to me, as a teacher. I was very excited about one group exercise on multiplication when GEAR UP group came up with a different answer from the other groups. It is the practice at schools and other groups were convinced that multiplication is easier with one digit numbers (e.g. 8x9); however, we tried to persuade the other groups that it is not necessarily. Students have just mastered addition; multiplication would be easier using a limited number of additions, regardless whether the number is of two or more digits. For instance, we were convinced that 20x3 would be

easier than 8x9, as it would include only 3 additions – 20+20+20. We were excited when we persuaded other participants."

**Steven Joel:** "I have seen the potential of the "open class" method. "Open class" is a result of input and output, which reflects the direct relationship between class preparation and outcome of the class. I am sure that each of GEAR UP participants has learnt a lot."

**Lane Ohli:** "All things I have learned from the workshop will be applied in my classroom this coming school year 2011-2012. One thing that I definitely want us to utilize is the "open class" for parents. I do believe that if we utilize "open class" for parents they can help us by helping their children with assignments and homework that they bring home."

**Phillip Albert:** "Most of the countries-participants shared a common problem: multiplication memorization. The multiplication song that Kolonia students sang is a good strategy to use for the students to memorize the multiplication table."

**Altrickson Likor:** "I have learnt two things that I strongly believe will really improve students' learning. I have learnt the multiplication song that I know that once students learn it, they will not have multiplication problems anymore. The open class activity gave parents the opportunity to see their kids learning and they could learn how to help them. Not only teachers should help but also parents."



GEAR UP participants during "Open class" observation exercise



### GEAR UP PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE:

"I ENJOYED SEEING GEAR UP TEACHERS ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN THE MATH SEMINAR. I FULLY TRUST OUR TEACHERS AND I WANT TO BEGIN OUR WORK WITH THE LATIN PHRASE: "AUT VIAM INVENIAM AUT FACIAM", WHICH TRANSLATES AS "I'LL EITHER FIND A WAY OR MAKE ONE". MANY THANKS!" – NORA