

Michigan State University

Wiba Anung Project

Principal Contacts

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North Central Region

1. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OUTREACH/ENGAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP

1.1. Abstract. The Wiba Anung (Early Star) project began in 2006 with the goals of establishing a research partnership to collectively examine the educational and health issues facing the American Indian population of Michigan. Since 2006, our research team has collaborated with the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan (which has seven tribal Head Start Programs under its auspices), the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, the Grand Traverse Bay Band of Ottawa and Chippewa, and Bay Mills Community College to identify the strengths and needs of the community and establish a research agenda which prioritized the collective goals of the community stakeholders and the university faculty.

Across two years, we assessed 324 3- to 5-year-old children from 20 tribal Head Start classrooms across 9 tribes. Children were assessed individually at the beginning and end of the school year by trained researchers using standardized measures of cognitive and linguistic school readiness (Lollipop; Chew, 1990) and inhibitory control (Kochanska, Jacques, & Vandegest, 1996). Also, measures of children's social competence were gathered from parents and teachers using the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2002).

Overall, children increased in their academic and social skills across the preschool year. However, results indicated that children of the tribal Head Start scored significantly below the national average for Head Start children in letter knowledge, number identification, numeration, inhibitory control, and writing at the beginning of the preschool year. And although many of these children did go on to meet the expected norms by the end of the school year, there were still a significant number (17%-51%) of children who did not.

1.2. Significance. MSU and the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan began the partnership to address the high level of risk for American Indian children's education and health outcomes. Risk factors include economic disparity of families (poverty among American Indian families is more than twice the national average; U.S. Census, 2000), low educational requirements for teachers; and depression, abuse and neglect, which may lead to behavioral problems and psychiatric symptoms for children (GAO, 2003;

Manson, Bechtold, Novins, & Beals, 1997). In addition, though Head Start will require a bachelor's degree for half of its teaching staff by 2013, the teachers of the tribal Head Start programs are well below the national average in this campaign to increase the educational background of the early childhood workforce due to their lack of access to four-year institutions and high-quality professional development. The primary goal of our project was to establish a partnership with stakeholders of the American Indian Head Start community to identify community goals, to collectively engage in scientifically rigorous research which identifies the strengths and challenges of the system, to design evidence-based interventions to support the community's goals, and to enhance their capacity to participate in and design their own research.

2. RELATIONSHIP AND RECIPROCITY

The Wiba Anung partners have come together to co-create a research focused partnership aimed at improving outcomes for children enrolled in Michigan based American Indian Head Start/Early Head Start programs. It began with a shared interest among two of the current partners—Michigan State University and the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan—to improve children's school readiness and quickly grew to include all tribally run programs in Michigan.

The partnership utilizes community based participatory research to assure that all aspects of the project will be the result of a co-creative process involving all partners. We began by spending the first year of the project getting to know each other by visiting the sites, talking with directors and staff, attending parent council meetings, and conducting focus groups with community members, parents, staff, and directors. For MSU faculty and staff who had not previously worked in American Indian communities, talking with staff and parents in all of the centers helped to garner an understanding of the strengths and challenges in these programs and communities. At the same time, parents, program staff, and community members were able to communicate their concerns about research in general and their hopes that this partnership would result in meaningful outcomes for their children and communities. These initial meetings helped the partners set the foundation for a true collaboration based on shared

goal setting, open and honest communication, and shared decision-making.

Also during the first year of the partnership, the Wiba Anung Research Advisory Team was convened. It consists of members representing faculty and staff from five different units at Michigan State University, all tribal Head Start Directors, staff from the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, and Head Start parents. The Research Advisory Team initially met twice a year in person. We now conduct yearly face-to-face meetings with quarterly phone calls.

The Research Advisory Team oversees all facets of program development and evaluation; policy recommendations are driven by evidence-based practices. The team designed the program approach, selected and assessed appropriate assessment tools, assessed the cultural content of the curriculum, developed individual teacher plans for professional development, reviewed results from data collected, and approved new grant submissions. Each team member brings a unique perspective to the issues we discuss. In addition to the formal roles that tribal members of the partnership bring to the table, they also share their unique knowledge of culture, tradition, and community. Faculty members bring the understanding of research methods and evidence-based practices. Through group discussion, our research methods, assessment strategies, and tools are assessed for cultural appropriateness.

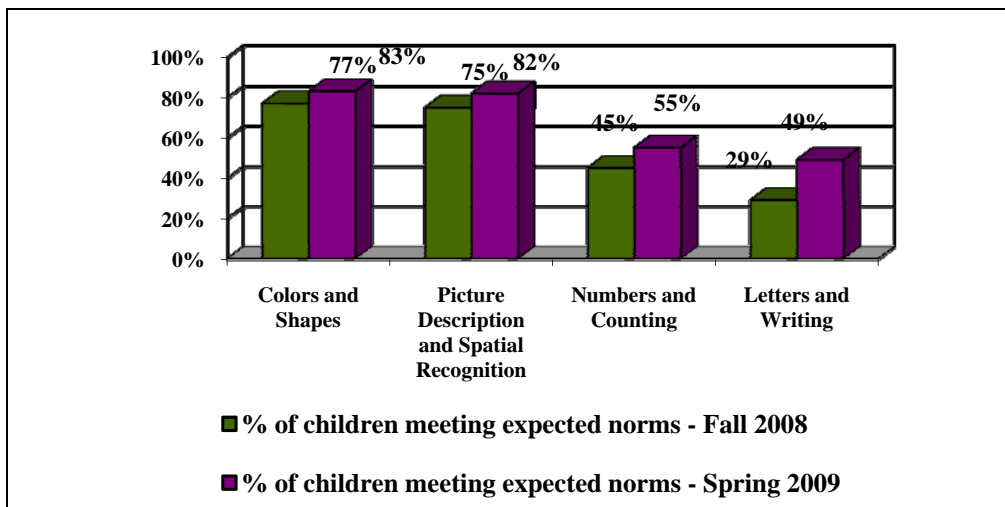
A smaller Core Research Team, consisting of the MSU team and the ITC Head Start Director, meets weekly via conference call. The Core Research Team addresses ongoing issues around project implementation and management. Every decision made regarding implementation and management occurs within the Core Research Team. The Research Advisory Team and the Core Research Team have been invaluable to the success of our project.

3. IMPACTS

3.1. Impacts on Community Partners

Our partnership has supported the community partners in many ways. We have established a partnership in which the community stakeholders are invested in the research and use research results to

inform their policy and practice. For example, results from our child outcomes study identified a gap in children’s cognitive and social skills. From this, community partners identified one priority goal: for teacher professional development to focus on supporting children’s cognitive and social skills, particularly those for which children had identified deficits (e.g., letter knowledge, number identification, numeration, writing, and inhibitory control).



This partnership has supported personnel from the partnering community agencies to fully participate in research activities (including standardized child assessment) and submit proposals for grants. One focus group participant said, “I don’t think we’ve ever done anything that wasn’t discussed by the group.” Community grants submitted include (1) expanding early childhood programs (ACF; funded August 2009), (2) training personnel in the preschool version of the CLASS measure of classroom quality (ACF; funded July 2009), and (3) implementing and evaluating a parent-child literacy intervention (U.S. Department of Education Indian Demonstration; submitted February 2010). Each of these grant proposals was submitted through the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan and led by a community partner with strong support from MSU.

One important influence of the partnership on the community partners is that they now identify themselves as a more joined community. The Head Start programs from The Inter-Tribal Council of

Michigan, Sault Saint Marie Tribe, and Grand Traverse Bay now work collaboratively on projects such as teacher and director professional development, program expansion, and curriculum development.

3.2. Impact on University Partners. First, university faculty have generated important scholarly outputs. To date the project has yielded 2 book chapters (in preparation) and 6 presentations at national or international professional meetings. Faculty from our team have also been asked to serve as editors of a *Child Development Perspectives* special issue on American Indian Communities.

Second, our project has been successful at securing continued funding for expanding and sustaining the project. We secured competitive funding from the Families and Communities Together Coalition to implement and evaluate our professional development program. This evaluation uses the gold standard in evaluation research, employing an experimental design in which teachers were randomly assigned to the control versus treatment groups. This approach speaks to both the scientific rigor of our work and the strength of our partnership. Because initial results were significant for this professional development study, a proposal will be submitted to the Institute of Education Sciences this October to implement and evaluate the program on a larger scale. Also, a grant proposal was submitted to the Institute of Education Sciences in October 2009 for the design and feasibility study of a culturally relevant curriculum.

Third, we have established a longitudinal database of parent behaviors; teacher classroom practices; and child cognitive, social, and language development. These data use high-quality observational measures; standardized, norm-referenced tests with strong evidence of reliability and validity; and repeated measures methodology. This longitudinal database allows for the use of sophisticated data analytic strategies for describing children's growth and the multiple factors that influence children's growth within a nested structure. Currently, our team is using this database to generate multiple scholarly publications.

Fourth, the Wiba Anung continues to institutionalize the University's role in outreach and engagement by providing a generalizable model of community collaboration surrounding a key social

issue which engaged the educational and scientific missions of the University. Through a community based participatory research methodology, the Wiba Anung project demonstrates the University's capacity to accomplish its agenda of research, teaching, and outreach. Finally, the educational experiences of students, both undergraduate and graduate, were enhanced by supporting their capacity to conduct research in partnership with communities.

3.3. Impact on Engagement Scholarship: Abstract for JHEOE (414 words)

In 2006, the Wiba Anung partnership, including faculty and researchers at MSU and the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, was established to identify and alleviate some of the challenges faced by Michigan-based American Indian Head Start children. The Wiba Anung partnership employs a multi-contextual theory of change, emphasizing the importance of home, community, and school in the successful development of children. We used a community based participatory research methodology to co-create a preventive-intervention plan for systems change.

Using a community based participatory research approach, community members informed the research design, selection of measures, and research priorities. Further, a team of community members have been trained in the standardized assessment of young children and classroom observation coding systems to collect child and classroom outcome data. The project has resulted in the development of a longitudinal database of parent, teacher, and child outcome data. Recently analyzed data indicated that although children of the American Indian Head Start programs showed growth in cognitive, social, and language skills across preschool, these children were still scoring below the national Head Start average, even at the end of the school year. Using our theory of change model in examining our results provided support for the community to identify three priority areas for continued research initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of the American Indian Head Start programs and, thus, children's development: (1) professional development for teachers, (2) cultural curriculum development, and (3) enhancing parent-child relationships and parent involvement in children's education.

In this paper, both community and university partners describe how we established our Wiba Anung Research Advisory Team, consisting of community members and Michigan State University faculty and staff to oversee each component of project development. We describe how we established a Cultural Advisory Team of tribal elders and language experts who influenced the cultural context approach to curriculum reform. Through the lens of both the university and community partner perspectives, we discuss how we overcame challenges to connect the resources and expertise of several communities to identify and answer shared questions regarding promoting child health and development in American Indian communities. We present findings from our longitudinal database and discuss how the partnership deals with research outcomes, program feedback, and policy issues and recommendations. We outline the strategies used to co-develop a process for implementing the project with the American Indian Head Start communities in Michigan to ensure that the project is meaningful to the community while also contributing to knowledge about effective practice through applied developmental science research.

4. LESSONS LEARNED AND BEST PRACTICES

The primary challenge that we faced in creating this partnership was the geographical distance between partners. The closest Head Start program is over an hour away and the furthest site is over ten hours from MSU. Our primary partners are located about four hours from MSU. This has created problems in expanding the number of faculty and students involved in the project as visits to project sites almost always involve an overnight stay. It also complicated partnership development. We needed time to build trust among members of the Michigan tribal communities and MSU researchers and that is best done in the community. Fortunately, we secured funding from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF; a subcontract through the University of Colorado at Denver) of \$395,000 to support face-to-face meetings for the Research Advisory Team and to spend time visiting each site, conducting site visits and focus groups. Through these various meetings, we were able to demonstrate the co-creative process that would be used in our work together.

One of the key lessons learned is the importance for faculty and staff to develop an understanding of appropriate research methodology and approaches to use in working with American Indian communities. The project has allowed university faculty and students to expand their roles to include involvement and presence in the community and to see things from various cultural perspectives. One focus group participant acknowledged this involvement by saying, “This is new to a lot of us, and they take the time to explain things about research...[The MSU partners] are so sincere and genuine about learning about the Native American culture.” From this greater sensitivity has come an effort to assist the community with developing their own IRB process. By nurturing the community’s ownership in the research project, there has been an increased interest among parents and community members in developing and conducting research that matters.

Perhaps most importantly, this collaboration has supported both the university and community partners to identify the benefits of engaging in a community based participatory research (CBPR) as one best practice for identifying and answering community questions. This partnership has been successful in establishing a research collaboration and, based on our longitudinal database of approximately 300 3- to 5-year-old children, we have established a program of research priorities for enhancing the educational and health outcomes of the children and families of the American Indian communities of Michigan. Further, initial results of our professional development program have identified the importance of engaging teachers in professional development that is targeted and individualized to teachers’ strengths, goals, and challenges. And, we have confirmed that our remote service-delivery system is an effective way to engage the teachers of the tribal Head Start programs of Michigan in professional development. This has important design and methodological implications for considering similar mechanisms for engaging teachers in credentialing and degree programs.

5. FUTURE AND ENDORSEMENTS

5.1. Future Outreach and Engagement. Over the past few years, we have established a strong collaborative partnership between university and community partners to identify community goals and

needs. We have gathered longitudinal data on family environment, teacher behaviors, and child development. These data have provided the team with a strong foundation. Based on these data, we have identified three priority areas for continued research initiatives: (1) professional development for teachers, (2) cultural curriculum development, and (3) enhancing parent-child relationships and parent involvement in children's education.

We identified our first priority area, the need for sustained professional development for teachers, early on. A professional development program was developed to meet the specific challenges of the American Indian Head Start program, including addressing geographical remoteness through an innovative remote service delivery system. The professional development is individualized to support each teacher's strengths and address individual challenges. Our team applied for and was awarded competitive funding for implementing and evaluating the professional development project. This project is currently finishing its first year of implementation and evaluation. The project will continue for one more year, at which time the results will be published. Also, the results of this study will be used to make any necessary revisions to the program for submission of a grant proposal to the Institute of Education Sciences for implementing and evaluating the revised version of this professional development program with over 80 American Indian Head Start classrooms across the country. This is important for evaluating the generalizability of the professional development program beyond the Michigan sample.

For our second priority area, developing a cultural curriculum, in October of 2009 we submitted a grant proposal to the Institute of Education Sciences for the development and feasibility of implementing a culturally relevant curriculum for the programs of the American Indian Head Starts. We should be informed of funding decisions in May of 2010.

Our third priority area, enhancing parent-child relationships and parent involvement in children's education, was developed in response to our baseline longitudinal data. Despite the great gains children made in school readiness over the course of the Head Start school year, from 17% to 51% of graduating

Head Start students did not meet school readiness norms for children their age. These data suggest that in addition to the support the children receive in the program, support at home is also needed in order to gain the necessary skills to enter kindergarten ready for more formalized reading instruction. To address this need, we collaboratively designed a parent-child book reading intervention. The goals of this intervention are: (1) to provide high-quality children's books to the families of the Tribal Head Start programs (10,000 books to 400 families), and (2) to support parents' use of evidence-based reading strategies known to support children's language and literacy outcomes. The project uses an experimental design model to evaluate the intervention. Children will be tested for language and literacy skills at the beginning and end of the intervention, and parent-child book reading sessions will be recorded and assessed throughout the project. A grant proposal to fund this three-year project was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in February 2010. We look forward to their response in July.

Outcome data from each of these projects will be used to inform our practice as well as to identify how the project has influenced the families and children of the American Indian Head Start programs. Also, these data will be used to identify the next set of goals for focusing the work of the Wiba Anung partnership.

5.2. Use of Award Dollars. Should the Wiba Anung partnership be fortunate enough to receive the C. Peter Magrath Award, the funds would be used to sustain the partnership by: (1) continuing to process and analyze the rich data gained from the first four years of the partnership, and (2) increasing the capacity for sustainability of the longitudinal database of child, parent, and teacher development. This funding would bridge current project activities to our proposed new initiatives for which federal grants have been submitted.

Processing and analyzing rich data. To our knowledge, we have established the most comprehensive database of tribal Head Start teachers' classroom practice in the US. Our plan is for these classroom observations to be coded using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; La Paro, Pianta, & Hamre, 2008). The Wiba Anung partnership successfully obtained a competitive training

grant, in September of 2009, and trained several members of the Wiba Anung team (both MSU faculty and ITC staff) as trainers of the CLASS. Funds from this award would be used to train a team of coders (both from ITC and MSU) to code the 320 video clips we have currently. Further, this funding would be used to establish a secure server, housed at MSU, in which all video clips could be uploaded to provide seamless access to videos for trained coders from ITC, Sault Ste. Marie Tribe, Grand Traverse Bay Band, and MSU. This is essential for continued data analysis as we continue to gather 160 video clips each year for the longitudinal database of teacher practices. Additionally, directors will be able to use these tapes as a resource for providing individualized feedback to teachers.

Increasing the capacity for the sustainability of the longitudinal database. As mentioned above, our longitudinal database has highlighted strengths and challenges for the American Indian Head Start programs of Michigan. Further, both the MSU team and local community see great value in continuing to maintain this database. We would use award funds to continue to increase the community's capacity for sustaining this longitudinal database by (1) transferring the training and leadership of the child assessment team from MSU to the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan and (2) working with Bay Mills Community College to train Inter-Tribal Council personnel in general data management techniques such that they would have the required skills for maintaining the database.

5.3. Endorsements. (1) Letter of support from MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon and (2) Letter of support from Sharon Teeple, Executive Director of the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan.

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

March 15, 2010

Selection Committee
C. Peter Magrath/W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Selection Committee:

For more than 150 years, Michigan State University has been a transformational force in the lives of our students, faculty, community, and world. We provide academic innovation, research and discovery. MSU leads discussions on significant intellectual issues, and focuses priorities based on societal needs. Our core values are quality, inclusiveness, and connectivity.

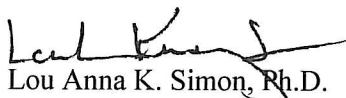
The engagement efforts by our faculty and students include a vast array of projects that demonstrate our university's commitment to collaborative, participatory, empowering, systemic, and transformative work anchored in scholarship. One particular effort is the *Wiba Anung* project, led by a team including Dr. Hiram Fitzgerald, University Distinguished Professor, Department of Psychology, Dr. Patricia Farrell, University Outreach and Engagement, and Dr. Hope Gerde, Department of Family and Child Ecology, College of Social Science.

This project has created a partnership that is now a model for university-community partnerships working with tribal Head Start programs throughout the United States. It is based on an approach to system change that is referred to as a community-based participatory evaluation, meaning that all aspects of the project involve a co-creative process between the American Indian community partners and the university faculty and researchers.

It is an honor to endorse this application to represent Michigan State University in the North Central Region for the 2010 W.K. Kellogg Foundation Engagement Award, and C. Peter Magrath University Community Engagement Award. I invite you to review the significance and impact of the *Wiba Anung* project.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Lou Anna K. Simon, Ph.D.
President

C: Dr. Hiram Fitzgerald
Dr. Lana Kaiser



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Hannahville Indian Community
Wilson, Michigan 49896

Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 49858

**Little Traverse Bay
Bands of Odawa Indians**
Harbor Springs, Michigan 49740

**Nottawaseppi Band of
Huron Potawatomi**
Fulton, Michigan 49052



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Baraga, Michigan 49908

**Lac Vieux Desert
Indian Community**
Watersmeet, Michigan 49969

**Sault Ste. Marie
Tribe of Chippewa Indians**
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan 49783

**Pokagon Band of
Potawatomi Indians**
Dowagiac, Michigan 49047

**Match-E-Be-Nash-She
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March 16, 2010

To whom it may concern:

As the Executive Director of the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan (ITC), it has been exciting and beneficial to see the partnership between Michigan State University's University Outreach and Engagement and the ITC Head Start and Early Head Start centers located at several tribal communities across the state. Through the partnership, our Head Start and Early Head Start centers have been able to participate in professional development programs and research that helps us to improve the quality of our services.

Through the professional development program component of this partnership, our teachers are receiving tailored mentoring from specialists at Michigan State University through a digital media system. We are very happy that our teachers, who are located all throughout the state of Michigan at the local tribal communities, are able to receive such mentoring.

The research projects that have been conducted through the partnership have provided us with information about how we can provide more support to the children and families we service. The first set of studies identified the need to develop a stronger cultural framework for our curriculum. We are working with Michigan State University to develop such a curriculum for use in our classrooms.

Finally, because this partnership has been so meaningful and productive, it has opened the door for further partnerships between ITC and Michigan State University. We are now collaborating with multiple departments across MSU to focus on issues that we identify as important for our communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our partnership for the 2010 C. Peter Magrath University Community Engagement Award.

Sincerely yours

Sharon L. Teeple
Executive Director

6. APPENDIX

Wiba Anung Research Advisory Committee

Name & Title	Agency/Tribe
Andrea Shaw, Center Director	Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc. – Bay Mills Indian Community
Ann Belleau, Head Start Director	Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc.
Anne Suggitt, Head Start Director	Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
Arnie Parish	Michigan State University, Native American Institute
Brian Chivis, Center Director	Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan – Nottawaseppi Band of Huron Potawatomi
Brody Waybrant	Bay Mills Community College, Nishnaabek Kinoomaadewin Virtual College
Hiram E. Fitzgerald	Michigan State University, University Outreach and Engagement
Hope Gerde	Michigan State University, Department of Human Development and Family Studies
Jessica V. Barnes	Michigan State University, University Outreach and Engagement, UCP
Joyce McClellan, Head Start Director	Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians
Julia Schroeder, Center Director	Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc. – Hannahville Indian Community
Kristi Pottala, Parent	Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
Mary Calcaterra	Michigan State University, Native American Institute
Mickey Killpatrick, Center Director	Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan– Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
Patricia A. Farrell	Michigan State University, University Outreach and Engagement, UCP
Peggy Minton, Parent	Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
Regina Boychief, Parent	Hannahville Indian Community
Rene Rosenbaum	Michigan State Univ., Dept. of Community, Ag., Rec. and Resource Studies
Sarah Hyatt, Center Director	Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc. – Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians
Sheri Codd, Center Director	Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc. – Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
Terri Denomie, Center Director	Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Inc. – Keweenaw Bay Indian Community
Vera Klingman, Parent	Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians

Promoting Academic and Social Success in American Indian Head Start Programs

Hope Gerde, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor

Department of Family and Child Ecology

College of Social Science

American Indian children face many challenges, beginning at a very young age. In 2006 Michigan State University entered into a long-term partnership called Wiba Anung (Early Stars) to help tackle some of those challenges for all children enrolled in Michigan-based American Indian Head Start/Early Head Start programs.

According to 2000 U.S. Census data more than 25 percent of American Indians/Alaska Natives live in poverty. Children are at risk for arriving at kindergarten without the social and language skills necessary for success. Data from a study of 20 Michigan Tribal Head Start classrooms show children score significantly below the national average for letter knowledge, number identification, counting, and writing. And Head Start education coordinators report that their greatest challenge is to find or develop cultural and bilingual curricula.

Hope Gerde, assistant professor in the [Department of Family and Child Ecology](#), is an early childhood specialist on the project. Her research focuses on how teachers' classroom practice supports children's language and literacy development during preschool and how well-designed professional development opportunities can enhance teachers' interactions with children.

A professional development program that Gerde designed for the American Indian Head Start teachers uses a technology-based distance learning model to reach teachers in geographically remote and isolated areas of Michigan. In this model, teachers record their classroom practice and upload video to a personal web page. An expert coach provides individualized feedback to teachers on this web page. The web page becomes a living document where teachers can view their videos and read constructive feedback for improving their interactions with the children in their classroom. Teachers of varying levels of technological savvy are successfully engaging in this professional development program.



Project Partners and Community Participation

"The Wiba Anung partnership is designed to build children's academic skills, build staff teaching skills, and integrate American Indian culture throughout the tribal Head Start system in Michigan," Gerde said. "Those goals look immense, until you consider the involvement of so many partners dedicated to this effort."

Along with Dr. Gerde and the Department of Family and Child Ecology, MSU partners include University Outreach and Engagement; the Native American Institute; the Department of Community, Agriculture, Recreation, and Resource Studies (CARRS); and the Department of Psychology.

Community partners include the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan, Bay Mills Community College,

Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians Head Start, and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians Head Start.

A 25-person Wiba Anung Research Advisory Team, consisting primarily of tribal members, oversees all facets of program development and policy recommendations. There is also a Research Advisory Team, a Cultural Competence Advisory Team, and a Core Research Team. Findings are shared with the Head Start Parent Council and Head Start directors. Continual communication has led to deeper understanding of tribal culture, as well as parent and community strengths, needs, and priorities.

University and Community Partners in the Co-Creative Process

The partnership has become a model for university-community partnerships working with tribal Head Start programs throughout the United States. It is based on an approach to system change that is referred to as community-based participatory evaluation. This means all aspects of the project involve a co-creative process between the American Indian community partners and the university faculty and researchers.

"Our teachers are receiving tailored mentoring through a digital media system. Because they are located all throughout Michigan, this is a tremendous benefit. And because this partnership has been so meaningful and productive, it has opened the door for further partnerships with Michigan State University," said Sharon L. Teeple, executive director of the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan.

Anne Suggitt is the manager of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians Early Childhood Programs, which include Head Start, Early Head Start, and Child Care. "The center directors, teachers, parents, and MSU faculty and researchers have worked together to develop a research agenda that is focused on helping us provide the highest quality early childhood education services to our children," said Suggitt. "We are excited about the professional development program we have developed, and we are in the process of working together to develop a cultural curriculum for tribal children in Michigan to explore their ancestry and practice their traditions using a curriculum that is reflective of the Native American way of life."

MSU graduate and undergraduate students are also part of the partnership, which is teaching them community based participatory research skills as well as giving them experience in civic engagement.

Dr. Gerde is enthusiastic about the project's goals, as well as the structure in place to accomplish those goals. "I'm honored to participate in a project that addresses a community-defined need, collaborates with a variety of partners, and includes strategies and solutions anchored in scholarship. It is a solid example of university-community partnerships at Michigan State University."

Written by Carla Hills, University Outreach and Engagement



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Abstracts of Publications

Barnes, J. V., Belleau, A., Farrell, P. A., & Fitzgerald, H. E. (2008, June). *Building Teacher Capacity through Collaborative Research with American Indian Head Start and Early Head Start Programs in Michigan*. Poster presented at Head Start's 9th National Research Conference, Washington D.C.

Barnes, J. V., Calcaterra, M. A., Parrish, A., Belleau, A., Farrell, P. A., & Fitzgerald, H. E. (2009, April). *Bridging the Gap: Understanding Cultural Factors Relevant to American Indian Head Start Programs*. Paper presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Child Development, Denver, Colorado.

Abstract. The majority of mainstream educational practices directed toward American Indian (AI) students have historically lacked a cultural component (Demmert, 2001). This is largely due to a history of assimilation practices of educators, the federal government, and religious denominations (Reyhner, 1989). Because the traditional methods of education are no longer in practice, AI students are less likely to experience academic success. The assimilated approach to education has also led to many AI communities' experience of a decrease in cultural knowledge and practice of tribal members (Demmert, 2001). However, research regarding the development and testing of educational alternatives for AI children are limited, especially options that incorporate AI linguistic and cultural patterns (Demmert & Hammer, 2003).

To address this need, we have implemented a community based participatory research (CBPR) project with nine Michigan tribes and the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan. Working with the tribal communities, we have established a research project to develop a culturally based, scientifically validated early childhood curriculum for use in tribal Head Start (AIHS) programs. Our first step taken to achieve this end includes the assessment of tribal members' perceptions of education and culture. This presentation presents the results from this assessment.

Barnes, J. V., Belleau, A., Gerde, H. K., Farrell, P. A., & Fitzgerald, H. E. (Submitted). *Promoting academic success in American Indian Head Start children in Michigan*. Symposium presentation submitted to APA Division 45 conference.

Abstract. In 2006, researchers at MSU and members of the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan met to address challenges for Michigan American Indian Head Start/Early Head Start children. The Wiba Anung partnership employs a multi-contextual theory of change, emphasizing the importance of home, community, and school in the successful development of children. We use community-based participatory research methodology, implementing co-creative processes linking community partners and university researchers to assure that successful prevention strategies and programs are sustainable. Through this project, indicators of children's school achievement skills were assessed in Fall 2008 and Spring 2009. Overall, findings indicate that children in these programs are at higher risk for school readiness at entry into the program. Although children made important gains in school readiness skills throughout the course of the year, further gains are needed for students to be academically successful in elementary school and beyond. These findings led the team to develop further projects which evaluate methods of increasing the quality of the learning environment in the programs. To overcome the geographic barriers, our team developed a remote service delivery system for implementing teacher professional development. The teachers (randomly assigned to treatment vs. control) are participating in this year-long professional development project through the use of video and computer equipment to communicate with an expert early childhood coach. Data for child outcomes and quality of the classroom environment are currently being collected.

Barnes, J. V., Gerde, H. K., Fitzgerald, H., Belleau, A., Farrell, P., Calcaterra, M. & Parish, A. (Accepted, 2010). *Growth in children's language, cognitive, and social skills across one year of American Indian Head Start*. Paper to be presented at the World Congress of the World Association for Infant Mental Health, Leipzig, Germany.

Abstract. Children of American Indian Head Start (36 - 48 months old) are at risk of arriving at kindergarten without the skills they need to be successful in school. Risk factors include economic disparity of families, low educational requirements for teachers, and depression, abuse and neglect which may lead to behavioral problems and psychiatric symptoms (GAO, 2003; Manson, Bechtold, Novins, & Beals, 1997). A body of research suggests that Native children's participation in a high-quality early educational program (e.g., Tribal Head Start) may be effective for preparing children for school and dealing with mental health issues and behavior problems (e.g., Clay, 1998; Paul, 1991).

The present study examined growth in children's cognitive, linguistic, and social skills longitudinally across the pre-kindergarten year of Tribal Head Start. Also, the home environment of these children was investigated. Participants include 109 4-year-old children from 20 Tribal Head Start classrooms across 9 tribes. Children were assessed individually at the beginning and end of the school year by trained research assistants using standardized measures of cognitive and linguistic school readiness (Lollipop; Chew, 1990), and inhibitory control (Kochanska, Jacques, & Vandegest, 1996).

Overall, children increased in their academic and social skills across the preschool year. However, results indicated that children of the Tribal Head Start scored significantly below the national average for Head Start children in letter knowledge, number identification, counting, and writing both at the beginning and end of the preschool year. Further analyses indicated that many of the children who did not meet the expected norms for academic and social outcomes at the beginning of their pre-kindergarten year did go on to meet the expected norms by the end of the school year. These results suggest that for American Indian children, participation in Tribal Head Start may be one way to develop cognitive, linguistic, and social skills for being successful in kindergarten and elementary school.