

Proceedings
Of the
The Rural Early Childhood Forum
On American Indian and Alaska Native Early Learning
July 28-29, 2005
William J. Clinton Presidential Center
Little Rock, Arkansas

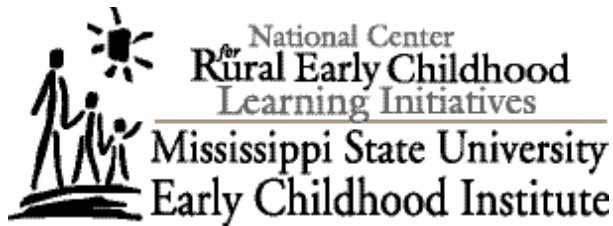
Sponsors

The National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives
Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute

The American Indian Leadership Program
The Center on Rural Education and Communities
Pennsylvania State University

Co-Sponsor

Southwestern Electric Power Company



Citation: National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives. (2006). *Proceedings of the Rural Early Childhood Forum on American Indian and Alaska Native Early Learning, July 28-29, 2005, Little Rock, AR*. (Rural Early Childhood Report No. 2). Mississippi State, MS: Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute.

Forum Chair

Cathy Grace, Ed.D.

Professor and Director

National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives

Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute

Editor

Elizabeth F. Shores, M.A.P.H.

Senior Research Associate

National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives

Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute

Design and Production

Lynn Bell

Multimedia Producer

National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives

Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute

(c) 2006 Mississippi State University

On the cover: Kipnuk (c) Barry Lindley 1999.



Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or group affiliation, age, disability, or veteran status.

The contents of this report were developed under Grant # P116Z05-0056 by the U.S. Department of Education. However, the contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and the reader should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Assessing the State of the Knowledge;
American Indian and Alaska Native Rural Early Childhood
Education

Kai A. Schafft, Susan C. Faircloth, and Nicole L. Thompson 1

FORUM PROGRAM COMMITTEE 12

AGENDA 13

PAPERS

Early Childhood Educational Opportunities for American Indian
and Alaska Native Children and Families

Tarajean Yazzie-Mintz 16

The Health and Development of American Indian and Alaska
Native Children in relationship to Reservation and Rural/Urban
Residence

Laurel S. Endfield 38

Effective Early Education Programs that Promote the Learning
of the English Language and Tribal Languages and Cultures

Nila M. Rinehart 55

Transitions of American Indian and Alaska Native Children from
Pre-school to Kindergarten

Cheryl Clay 79

American Indian and Alaska Native School Readiness

Nicole L. Thompson, Margaret A. Pope, and Jeanne Holland 100

Young American Indian / Alaskan Native Children with
Disabilities: Implications for Policy, Research, and Practice

Susan C. Faircloth 114

American Indian and Alaska Native Early Childhood Family
Involvement: A Review of the Literature

SusanRae Banks-Joseph and Laurie D. McCubbin 132

School Leaders

Roger Bordeaux 155

PARTICIPANTS 173

Introduction
Assessing the State of the Knowledge:
American Indian and Alaska Native Rural Early Childhood
Education

Kai A. Schafft, Susan C. Faircloth, and Nicole L. Thompson

OVER THE COURSE of the history of the United States, American Indians and Alaska Natives have consistently remained among the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups along an array of indicators from income and employment, health care and life expectancy, to educational attainment (Gonzales, 2003). Despite these challenges, American Indians and Alaska Natives have demonstrated remarkable resiliency (see Endfield's contribution and Banks-Joseph & McCubbin's contribution, these proceedings). Despite the threats posed by disease, poverty and concerted efforts to eradicate native culture and language, Native communities, along with their languages and traditional cultures, continue to persist. According to census figures, at the beginning of the 20th century, American Indians numbered about 237,000. By the end of the 20th century, however, that figure had increased to just under 2.5 million (Gonzales, 2003). Native communities have been able to maintain traditional beliefs and cultural practices in the face of an often brutal history of European colonization and government assimilationist policies (Banks-Joseph & McCubbin, 2005; Gallegos, Villenas, & Brayboy, 2003; Johnson, 2003). Although social and economic conditions for American Indians and Alaska Natives have generally improved over the last 100 years, in comparison to other groups, Native people still lag behind on many social, economic and educational indicators (Snipp, 1995).

Arguably, improving educational opportunities must be a main thrust in the effort to improve the life chances of American Indian and Alaska Native children, increase community vitality, and preserve native languages and cultural traditions and practices. Early childhood education is a crucial first step in increasing the chances of educational success, both in the short-term and the long-run. Research

since the 1960s has documented short-term benefits including increased cognitive and social skills as well as increases in later academic achievement. Similarly, early childhood education has been tied to decreased referrals to special education, and decreased grade retention (Barnett, 1998; Bryant & Maxwell, 1997; Illinois State Board of Education, 1985; Nieman & Gastright, 1981; Yoshikawa, 1995).

These findings are important to consider in light of the relationship between educational attainment and economic security in later life. Census data show that the average annual earnings for college graduates is \$45,400, as compared with \$25,900 for high school graduates and only \$18,900 for adults who never completed high school. Additionally, these earning inequalities have increased over the past 25 years, indicating the growing significance of education for socioeconomic well-being (Day & Newburger, 2002). The gap in academic achievement between Native and non-Native peoples thankfully has narrowed in the last 30 years. However, as Ward (2005) noted, as recently as 1980, over 8.4 % of Native children did not complete fifth grade as opposed to 2.6 % of Whites. American Indian and Alaska Native youth remain at the highest risk for high school dropout of any racial or ethnic group, and are much less likely to complete a four-year degree or higher than White or African American college students (Ward & Snipp, 1996).

The papers in this volume join other commentators in noting the marked gaps in research on Indian Education (see, for example, Deyhle & Swisher, 1997). Regardless of the logistic, cultural, and other challenges that may be to some degree responsible for this gap, the lack of research-based knowledge in this area is to the detriment of Indian educators and the Indian communities within which they work. The absence of research, however, is not due to a lack of important unanswered questions.

Research on American Indian Education:
Addressing the Gaps

The National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initia-

tives, known as Rural Early Childhood; Penn State's American Indian Leadership Program (AILP); and Penn State's Center for Rural Education and Communities (CREC) in 2004 began discussing what might be done to address these research needs and gaps, particularly with regards to early childhood education and educational leadership. Our discussions resulted in the convening of an "experts" conference, the *Rural Early Childhood Forum on Native American and Alaska Native Early Learning*, of which this proceeding is one result. The forum was comprised of academic researchers and faculty, Native educators, Native early childhood education specialists, and community leaders with a strong interest in and concern for rural Indian early childhood education.

Participants in this forum were invited to revisit the American Indian and Alaska Native Education Research Agenda (Strang, Von Glatz, & Hammer, 2002; Strang & Von Glatz, 2001) that was prepared in response to President Clinton's 1998 White House Executive Order 13096 on Indian Education. Our aim was twofold: first, to assess the current state of rural Indian early childhood education, with an emphasis on the years prior to formal school entry, as well as educational leadership as it pertains to rural Indian early childhood education; and second, to discuss how research might be initiated that would help to fulfill the goals of the research agenda.

The forum took place July 28-29, 2005 at the William J. Clinton Center in Little Rock, Arkansas. This was the first academic meeting ever held at the Clinton Center. More than 30 people, recognized as experts in their research/issue areas, participated in the forum. Participants presented papers synthesizing research gaps in key areas of Indian Education, and participated in roundtable discussions to determine a best course of research, partnership and action, identifying the most needed areas of research as well as strategies for partnering with communities and leveraging resources to carry out this work.

Why Rural?

A strong focus of the forum was the discussion of how key

issues related to early childhood education might play out differently across rural and urban contexts, with a specific focus on rural settings. Although there are concentrations of Native populations in large urban areas such as New York City and Los Angeles (Ogunwole, 2002), almost one million American Indians or Alaska Natives reside in nonmetropolitan and/or reservation settings (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004), where much of Indian education occurs. However, research has also shown that the nonmetropolitan location is associated with decreased educational attainment. Snipp (1989), for example, has shown that the percentage of American Indian and Alaska Native students falling behind by grade level differs significantly by location. Evidence shows dropout rates are also increased in nonmetropolitan areas (Ward, 1995, 2005). Challenges in education include shortages of highly qualified teachers, higher costs for transporting students (as well as the time spent by students on school buses), and the challenges of meeting the requirements of the No Child Left Behind legislation in the face of often limited fiscal and human resources. There also is less access to programming and social services in rural areas, as well as decreased economic opportunities, increased concentrations of poverty and limited political power relative to urban areas.

On the other hand, rural and reservation settings and the tribal communities located there may represent valuable opportunities for preserving traditional cultures and knowledge that have been demonstrated as vital for increasing academic achievement among Native children and for decreasing dropout rates (Kushman & Barnhardt, 2001; Ward, 2005). Recognizing the strong interrelationships between school and community and building these interrelationships into educational practice can yield powerful results in educational improvement, community vitality, and preservation of traditional cultural beliefs and practices (Kushman & Barnhardt, 2001). Understanding the specific contexts in which Indian education takes place, including both the challenges and assets posed by the rural context, is a crucial part of developing a better understanding of promising models and practices to improve the life chances of Native children,

and of ensuring the continued social, cultural and economic vitality of the communities of which they are a part.

Assessing the State of the Knowledge:
Rural Early Childhood Indian Education

The papers that follow in this volume represent an important summation of the state of the knowledge on rural early childhood education as it concerns American Indian and Alaska Native children.

Yazzie-Mintz addresses two central questions. First, to what extent do Native children and families in reservation, rural, urban and other settings have early childhood education opportunities available to them? Second, how might an appropriate and effective network of tribal early childhood programs be organized, especially in rural settings? To address the first question, Yazzie-Mintz uses census data, Head Start Statistics and Children's Defense Fund reports. In aggregate, Native children appear to have slightly decreased access to early childhood education opportunities in comparison to other children. However, she observes that too often aggregated data hide differences across tribal contexts. "Scientific" data collection procedures tend to obscure inter-tribal and community-level differences; while more targeted studies might have greater potential to yield meaningful data for American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Endfield discusses the heightened risk of a variety of health problems for Native children, noting that these problems are embedded within a history of social, political and economic marginalization associated with western expansion and European conquest. Improved access to health care and government programs has helped American Indian populations to grow and enjoy improved health, yet serious problems still remain that affect Native children including diabetes and fetal alcohol syndrome, compounded by broader social inequalities. Effectively addressing these problems will remain a challenge in rural areas where access to health services remains limited.

Rinehart examines promising practices in early childhood educa-

tion programs, particularly with regard to both instruction in English (as a first or second language), and effective methods of preserving and/or revitalizing native language and culture. Her discussion results from both her review of research literature as well as her firsthand experience developing and implementing a language revitalization program for the Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes' Head Start in Juneau, Alaska. Her paper emphasizes the importance of culturally appropriate early childhood education for American Indian and Alaska Native children for developing a strong sense of cultural identity as well as for providing the foundations for later academic achievement. At the same time she notes that little research exists as to the effectiveness of different approaches for Native children, and much of what does exist does not address inter-tribal differences that might affect the appropriateness and/or effectiveness of different programs.

Clay explores the cultural and language discontinuities associated with Native children entering into kindergarten. She discusses the programs preschools and elementary schools use to support Native families as their children transition between preschool and elementary school, emphasizing the parental role of "cultural mediator" and the importance of involving multiple stakeholders including educators, parents and community members in the transition process. Ultimately however, she concludes that there is a disconcerting lack of comprehensive research investigating transition models, particularly for Native children.

Thompson, Pope, and Holland investigate the issue of whether promoting school readiness among American Indian and Alaska Native children through current mainstream developmentally appropriate practices may conflict with Native traditions and culture. To this end they address two central questions. First, how must early childhood programs be structured so that they foster the fundamental skills that children are expected to have when they enter school, and second, how effective are these early childhood programs and activities for promoting school readiness for Native children? Compounding the debate over what exactly constitutes school readiness and how

this concept should be defined, Thompson et al., like Yazzie-Mintz, point to the problems of generalizing across groups, and argue that “programs and assessments which address the school readiness of Native children must also address the cultural differences of these children” [pp. 100-113, these proceedings].

Faircloth addresses two main questions. First, how is the incidence of disabilities among infant and pre-school aged American Indian and Alaska Native children related to differing residential contexts including rural (reservation and non-reservation), peri-urban and urban residence? Second, how can early childhood programs accommodate Native children with disabilities? While the disproportionate representation of Native students in special education programs within public and BIA-operated or funded schools is well-documented, little is known about the status of these children prior to their enrollment into the educational system.

Banks-Joseph and McCubbin discuss American Indian and Alaska Native community involvement in their children’s schools and programs and the community and school-level factors that appear to be associated with involvement and best practices specific to Native children promoting family and community involvement in early childhood education programs. The authors find that the research literature in this area is extremely limited, especially when narrowed only to Native children. Following Johnson (2003), they argue that the lack of research on family involvement in American Indian and Alaska Native early childhood education may be due in part to research approaches that fail to take into account indigenous perspectives leading to an appropriate understanding of family involvement.

Finally, Bordeaux discusses appropriate educational leadership practices in rural and reservation-based schools and communities serving American Indian and Alaska Native children. He argues that effective leaders must have an intimate understanding of local community culture, including local politics, family structure and traditional practices of communication.

Conclusions:
Summarizing the State of the Knowledge

The most overwhelming result of the forum was the consistent identification of the lack of research in all areas of American Indian and Alaska Native early care and education. All of the authors experienced difficulty when attempting to identify data-sets that contained information about Native children. Most quantitative data available related to early childhood education is not disaggregated to tribal and community levels. Although case studies and ethnographic research exists at more disaggregated levels, the generalizability of these findings remains limited as does the capacity for generating appropriate programmatic responses to American Indian and Alaska Native early childhood education needs. Quite simply, more research is needed—most of the questions were only partially answerable due to the lack of quantitative and qualitative data.

Further, the need for culturally sensitive research abounds. Current research practices must respect Native traditions and policies. Gone are the days when a lone researcher could enter an American Indian or Alaska Native community to document what the Native people do. Research today must actively involve the people being researched—American Indian and Alaska Native people must be involved in the research process—research can no longer be conducted *on* Native people, but must now be conducted *with* Native people. The extensive amount of research needed in Native communities is going to require cooperation and participation from a variety of entities. Multiethnic research teams, researcher-community collaboration, and community partners must actively engage in research processes to eliminate the existing gaps in knowledge about the early care, development, and education of American Indian and Alaska Native people. We hope that this forum, as well as these proceedings, helps to move these efforts forward.

References

- Banks-Joseph, S., & McCubbin, L. D. (2005). American Indian and Alaska Native early childhood family involvement: A review of the literature. In National Center for Early Childhood Learning Initiatives, *Proceedings of the Rural Early Childhood Forum on American Indian and Alaska Native Early Learning, July 28-29, 2005, Little Rock, AR*, (pp. 132-154). (Rural Early Childhood Report No. 2). Mississippi State, MS: Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute.
- Barnett, W. S. (1998). Long-term effects of early childhood programs on cognitive and school outcomes. In W.S. Barnett & S. S. Boocock (Eds.), *Early care and education for children in poverty: Promises, programs and long-term results* (pp. 11-44). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Bryant, D. & Maxwell, K. (1997). The effectiveness of early intervention for disadvantaged children. In: M.J. Guralnick, (Ed.), *The effectiveness of early intervention* (pp. 23-46). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- Day, J. C., & Newburger, E. C. (2002). *The big payoff: Educational attainment and synthetic estimates of work-life earnings*. Current Population Reports P23-210. Washington, DC: United States Census Bureau.
- Deyhle, D., & Swisher, K. (1997). Research in American Indian and Alaska Native education: From assimilation to self-determination. In M. W. Apple, (Ed.), *Review of Research in Education*, 22 (pp. 113-194). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Executive Order No. 13096, 63 FR 42681 (1998).
- Gonzales, A. A. (2003). American Indians: Their contemporary reality and future trajectory. In D. L. Brown & L. E. Swanson (Eds.), *Challenges for Rural America in the twenty-First century* (pp. 43-56). University Park: Penn State.

- Gallegos, B., Villenas, S., & Brayboy, B. (2003). Indigenous education in the Americas: Diasporic identities, epistemologies, and postcolonial spaces. *Educational Studies*, 34(2), 143-146.
- Illinois State Board of Education. (1985). *Effectiveness of early childhood education programs: A review of research*. Springfield, IL: Department of Planning, Research and Evaluation. ERIC Document No. ED 260 825.
- Johnson, G. G. (2003). Resilience, a story: A postcolonial position from which to (re)view Indian education framed in 'at risk' ideology. *Educational Studies*, 34(2), 182-197.
- Kushman, J. W., & Barnhardt, R. (2001). Reforming education from the inside-out: A study of community engagement and educational reform in rural Alaska. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 17(1), 12-26.
- Nieman, R. H., & Gastright, J. F. (1981). The long term effects of Title I preschool and all-day kindergarten. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 63, 184-185.
- Ogunwole, S. U. (2002). *The American Indian and Alaska Native population: 2000*. Census 2000 Brief: C2KBR/01-15. Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Snipp, C. M. (1989). *American Indians: The first of this land*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Snipp, C. M. (1995). American Indian economic development. In E. N. Castle (Ed.), *The changing American countryside* (pp. 303-317). Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.
- Strang, W., & Von Glatz, A. (2001). American Indian and Alaska Native education research agenda. Washington, DC: U.S. Departments of Education.
- Strang, W., Von Glatz, A., & Hammer, P. C. (2002). Setting the agenda: American Indian and Alaska Native education research priorities. (EDO-RC-02-14.) Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

- U.S. Census Bureau. (2004, December). American Indian and Alaska Native Summary File 2000 Census of Population and Housing. AIANSF-01.
- Ward, C. (1995). American Indian high school completion in rural southeastern Montana. *Rural Sociology*, 60(3), 416-434.
- Ward, C. (2005). *Native Americans in the school system*. Lanham, MD: Altamira Press.
- Ward, C., & Snipp, C. M. (1996). An introduction to American Indian human capital and development. In W. C. Ward & C. M. Snipp (Eds.), *American Indian human capital and economic development* (pp. 1-6). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Yoshikawa, H. (1995). Long-term effects of early childhood programs on social outcomes and delinquency. *Future of Children* 5(3), 51-75.

FORUM PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Nicole L. Thompson, Ph.D. (Menominee/Mohican)

Assistant Professor and Coordinator

American Indian and Alaska Native Initiative

National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives

Mississippi State University Early Childhood Institute

Susan C. Faircloth, Ph.D. (Coharie)

Assistant Professor

Departments of Education Policy Studies and Special Education

The Pennsylvania State University

Kai A. Schafft, Ph.D.

Department of Education Policy Studies

The Pennsylvania State University

AGENDA

Thursday, July 28, 2005

9:00 A.M.

CONVENE

Welcome

Elizabeth F. Shores

Greeting

David Alsobrook

Director

William J. Clinton Presidential Library

Prayer

Winona Sample (Red Lake Chippewa)

Opening Remarks

Cathy Grace, Co-chair

John Tippeconic, (Comanche), Co-chair

9:30-10:00 A.M.

Opening Discussion

Julie Quaid, Pigeon Big Crow,

Roger Bordeaux

10:00-10:20 A.M.

Presentation: Resources

Tarajeau Yazzie-Mintz

10:20-10:35 A.M.

Response

Linda Kills Crow, Linda Smith

10:35-10:55 A.M.

Presentation: Health

Laurel Endfield

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| 10:55-11:10 A.M. | <i>Responses</i> Cheryl Wilson, Julie Quaid |
| 11:10-11:30 A.M. | <i>Presentation: Language</i> Nila Rinehart |
| 11:30-11:45 A.M. | <i>Responses</i> Gloria Sly, Tarajeau Yazzie-Mintz |
| 11:45 A.M. – 12:15 P.M. | BREAK |
| 12:15 – 1:15 P.M. | LUNCHEON |
| | <i>“No Child Left Behind”</i> Nicole Bowman |
| | <i>“The Indian Health Service”</i> Cheryl Wilson |
| 1:15-1:30 P.M. | BREAK |
| 1:30-1:50 P.M. | <i>Presentation: Transitions</i> Cheryl Clay |
| 1:50-2:10 P.M. | <i>Responses</i> Rick St. Germaine, Dwight Hare |
| 2:10-2:30 P.M. | <i>Presentation: School Readiness</i> Nicole Thompson, Margaret Pope, and Jeanne Holland |
| 2:30-2:50 P.M. | <i>Responses</i> Cheryl Clay, Pigeon Big Crow |

2:50-3:10 P.M. *Presentation: Special Education*
Susan Faircloth

3:10-3:25 P.M. *Response*
Susan Banks

3:25-4:00 P.M. Discussion

4:00 P.M. RECESS

Friday, July 29, 2005

9:00 A.M. RECONVENE

9:15-9:35 A.M. *Presentation: Family and Community Involvement*
Susan Banks

9:35-9:50 A.M. *Responses*
Debbie Lente-Jojola, Pigeon Big Crow

9:50-10:10 A.M. *Presentation: School Leaders*
Roger Bordeaux

10:10-10:25 A.M. *Responses*
Grayson Noley, David Beaulieu

10:25-10:45 A.M. BREAK

10:45 A.M.-NOON *Discussion*

NOON ADJOURN