In the current issue of the Harvard Educational Review, the authors Hibels, Faircloth, and Farkas (2008) provided a research article that investigated why American Indian and Alaska Native students were placed in special education in the early grades. Building on the concept of school readiness, the authors identified academic readiness as a determinant of special education referral and placement among American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) third graders was the individual student’s academic readiness when kindergarten began, as measured by the average of his or her pre-reading and pre-mathematics test scores. The data that was analyzed from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study kindergarten cohort suggested that high rates of special education placement among AI/AN students in the early grades are related, in large part, to a lack of academic readiness upon entering school, as measured by standardized tests in reading and math. The authors’ study found that many AI/AN children enter school less academically prepared than their peers.

The authors suggest that in developing interventions, particular attention should be given to the development and use of culturally and linguistically relevant interventions tailored to the unique needs and abilities of this population. An exciting component of their finding is academic readiness/achievement is a potentially “alterable” variable that can be improved given effective interventions.


The publication review was submitted by Dr. Eugene R. Thompson (Diné).

On Monday evening November 24, 2008, a very significant event took place at the Pueblo of Isleta Resort. Parents, of Native American students, and the Albuquerque Public Schools Superintendent came together to discuss issues related to Native American students in APS. This community meeting took place in partnership with the APS Leadership team, the APS Indian Education Department, and the Pueblo of Isleta.

The event was hosted by J. Robert Benavides, Governor, Pueblo of Isleta and was attended by over one hundred people. Governor Benavides in his opening remarks stated the importance of such a meeting as this one and when it came to the education of our young people it is “not about today, it is about tomorrow”. The Governor has been a strong supporter of the APS Indian Education Department’s efforts in providing services to all Native American students in APS.

Winston Brooks, APS Superintendent, during the meeting of the leaders of Albuquerque Public Schools and parents of Native American students, discusses the 8 goals in APS.

Winston Brooks, APS Superintendent, conducted the meeting with all who were in attendance and heard from participants about “what APS is doing well?”, “what could APS do better?” and “if you were Superintendent, what would you change?” Parents who attended the meeting worked in small groups to discuss these and other issues and reported to the Superintendent’s leadership team who acted as moderators for the activity. There was much discussion and sharing of ideas during the sessions. Comments at the end of the meeting from some parents voiced positive remarks about the process used by APS to get input from parents of Native American students. At the end of the meeting, Winston Brooks was given thanks for his willingness to listen to the Native community.

Joy M. Leonard, IED

STORYTELLER

ALBUQUERQUE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Indian Education Newsletter

January 2009

Strengthening the Partnership for Native American Education in APS

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J. Robert Benavides, Governor, Pueblo of Isleta making opening remarks at the Pueblo of Isleta Resort during the recent community meeting hosted by the Governor.

Current Issues In AI/AN Education Research

American Indian and Alaska Native Students in Special Education Programs

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“Our group is full of strong young women who strive to succeed in a hard world. We are the Butterfly Fancy Shawl Dancers!”

“New Wilson Middle School Student Council Officers are Miranda Lee, treasurer and Sheil Weekoty, President.”

“Wilson Middle School Ohiyesa Tornado Tube activity shows Spencer Platero, Dominique Key, Thiamen Apache, and Meldon Willis. Students used creativity and observation to learn how to make a tornado happen.”

“Zia ES has a Resource Teacher for Native American students for the third year. With a population of 50 Native American students, Zia ES gives 25 Native American students support in literacy and culture. Mrs. Juanita Harjo works out of the Indian Education Department, using various multi-sensory reading programs for the differing needs of the students. She works with Native American students in Kindergarten through 5th grades. The three reading programs Mrs. Harjo uses are Wilson, Orton-Gillingham, and Fundations. The students also read, listen to, and discuss Native American literature with emphasis on indigenous values. Just as importantly, the students enjoy meeting with and getting to know other Native American students in this school. Juanita Harjo, Resource Teacher, Zia ES”

“Wilson Middle School Butterfly Fancy Shawl Dancers are (L-R) Shawny Jamon, Shelaine Johnson, Angelita Vega, Jerica Yanito, Lavonnia Barbone, Mariah Willis, and Brianna Billie.”

“This special gathering. A special highlight of the evening included the outgoing Miss Native Highland High School Ariel Ellsworth passing the Crown to Chantal Francis, and Chief Laniel Muskett passing the Sash to the new Chief, Kameron Begay.

All students were required to give their self reflection of the events by using the new Indigenous Evaluation Rubric developed by the Indian Education Department. An extreme amount of growth was documented in the area of mastery, belonging and sharing. For some students this was the first time they went out of their way to help and support other classmates. In addition, students who had experience and leadership skills volunteered their knowledge to ensure the success of others.”

John Williams, Resource Teacher, Highland High School

“Highland High School Fall Pageant and Pow Wow was a great success. Featured groups participating in the events included the La Mesa Elementary School singers and fancy shawl dancers and the Wilson Middle School Fancy Shawl Dancers. The many dancers and 9 drum groups made this a memorable event. It is estimated that over 500 people attended this special gathering. A special highlight of the evening included the outgoing Miss Native Highland High School Ariel Ellsworth passing the Crown to Chantal Francis, and Chief Laniel Muskett passing the Sash to the new Chief, Kameron Begay.

A great deal of preparation was necessary to plan and carry out these events. On October 1st the students held a community dinner to raise money and provide some great Native food selections. Graphic programs such as Illustrator and Word were used to create fliers and programs for advertisement for the Pow Wow events. Marketing efforts by students included faxing and posting fliers around the community and schools. Students also spoke on the radio airwaves to advertise and promote the events. Students met during evening meetings to prepare scripts, power point presentations, and practice talents.

The selection and crowning of the Native Royalty during the Pow Wow was a great success. Featured groups participating in the events included the La Mesa Elementary School singers and fancy shawl dancers and the Wilson Middle School Fancy Shawl Dancers. The many dancers and 9 drum groups made this a memorable event. It is estimated that over 500 people attended this special gathering. A special highlight of the evening included the outgoing Miss Native Highland High School Ariel Ellsworth passing the Crown to Chantal Francis, and Chief Laniel Muskett passing the Sash to the new Chief, Kameron Begay.

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