Inclusion of American Indian and Alaska Native Language and Culture in Head Start

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TRC Language and Culture Community of Learning
Introduction

Data on American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) parents’ perspectives about Native language

Data on how AI/AN Head Start programs include Native language in the classroom

Importance of inclusion of culture and Native language for decision making
Introduction
The State of the Research
National Data on Head Start Programs

FACES
• FACES was conducted every 3 years from 1997-2009 in Regions I-X
• After a major redesign in 2012, it was last conducted in 2014
• Will be conducted again starting in fall 2019

AI/AN FACES
• Began in 2015 after multi-year collaborative planning effort to address process for engaging in research with sovereign tribal nations; concerns about use of existing measures in Region XI
• Will be conducted again starting in fall 2019
Region XI Head Start

- Approximately 565 federally recognized AI/AN communities
- 51% of AI/AN Children in Head Start are served in Regions I-X
- 85% of Region XI children are AI/AN
Data on AI/AN Parents’ Perspectives about Native Language
Just over half of AI/AN children in Region XI Head Start had parents who reported English only spoken at home; just under half had parents who reported at least some Native language use at home.
The majority of AI/AN children in Region XI Head Start were in homes where English was the primary language.
In homes with some Native language use, 99% of children had parents who felt it was somewhat or very important for their child to learn a Native language.

In homes with English only spoken, 90% of children had parents who felt it was somewhat or very important for their child to learn a Native language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance that child learns tribal language for AI/AN children</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>84.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Importance that child learns tribal language for AI/AN children with some tribal language spoken in the child’s home

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance that child learns tribal language for AI/AN children with English only spoken in the child’s home</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all important</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not at all important ■ Somewhat important □ Very Important ▲
Data on AI/AN Head Start Programs’ Inclusion of Native language in the classroom
Classroom and Center Staff

- **84%** of children were in classrooms with at least one AI/AN staff member
- **50%** of children were in classrooms in which their lead teacher was AI/AN
- **71%** of children had a Head Start program director who was AI/AN*
- **69%** of children had a Head Start center director who was AI/AN*

*These data were obtained from questionnaire items for which staff identified their connection to their community
62% of children were in classrooms in which Native Language use was observed.

- Native Language Use was Formal: 83%
- Native Language Use was Informal: 53%
Less than 25% of Region XI Head Start Children are in Classrooms Using Cultural or Locally-designed Curriculum or Assessment Tools

- % of Region XI Children in a Head Start Classroom Using a Native Cultural Curriculum
  - No, 77.5%
  - Yes, 22.5%

- % of Region XI Children in a Classroom using Locally-designed or Native-specific tool to assess Native Language Development or Cultural Practices
  - No, 80.5%
  - Yes, 19.5%
Importance of inclusion of culture and Native language for decision making
Importance of Native Language in the Context of Revitalization
Tribal programs choose to participate in Region XI Head Start because of the infusion of our cultures and languages that make our programs unique from non-tribal programs.

And our parents want their children to learn about their Native language and culture in an age appropriate setting.

This is where children begin to find their sense of pride in who they are as native people and to honor and practice their culture and language.
For more information on AI/AN FACES

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For more information on the TRC

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Questions about the upcoming briefs on AI/AN children’s Native language and cultural experiences at home and in their Head Start classrooms, please contact:

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