Early Childhood Distance Partnership Program
Montana State University
Fourth Cohort funded by the Office of Indian Education
US State Department of Education
A LITTLE HISTORY

Purpose

• Address the needs of Tribal Head Start/Early Childhood educators to complete a Bachelor Degree

• Respond to national Heart Start mandates to increase the educational attainment of Head Start teachers

• Partner with Tribal Colleges and respective Tribal Head Start/Early Childhood Programs
NEED

• Distance of reservation communities from higher education institutions offering four year degrees in ECE
• Economic realities
• Familial & cultural factors
• Place bound
• Technology challenges
• Institutional infrastructure challenges
Institutional Infrastructures

• Administration
• Admissions Office and Registrar
• Articulation Agreements & curricula alignment
• Financial Aid, Consortium Agreements & Dual enrollments
• Business Office
• Health Service
• Text Book Store
• Technology (Burns Center & Tech coordinators)
Technology

• Technology needs
• Existing skills
• Access issues
• Delivery platforms
• Training
• Student technology support & services
What is the ECEDP?

- Unique distance learning program
- Helps Head Start teachers and Early Childhood Educators from six tribal communities to complete bachelor’s degree in Early Childhood Education
- Enables ECEDP students to live and teach in their home communities
- Connects Native early childhood educators throughout reservations in the state of Montana
Communities and participants

- Blackfeet Early Childhood Center
- Babb Head Start
- Seville Head Start
- Heart Butte Head Start
- Browning School District
- Fort Belknap Head Start
- Rocky Boy Head Start (Box Elder & Buno)
- Fort Peck Head Start (Poplar, Frazer, & Wolf Point)
- Crow Head Start (Crow Agency, Lodge Grass & Fort Smith)
Collaboration & Partnerships

- MSU – Tribal Colleges – Tribal Head Start/Early Childhood Programs
- Tribal Community-based programs that support children, families and communities
- NAPA: Nutrition & Physical Activity Program
- Health & Movement Training (Health Enhancement)
- State Early Childhood Project
About the program

- Tuition & fees
- Laptop computer & printer
- Three years of home internet service
- Technology training (Burns Center)
- Mentors & mentor meetings
- Travel for face-to-face meetings
- Conference attendance & student presentations
- NAEYC membership
- Certification
Curriculum

- Institutional articulation agreements
- On-line delivery of last two years of upper division courses to complete Bachelor Degree
- All courses are aligned with NAEYC standards
- On-site paras, internships & student teaching
- Culturally responsive coursework
- On-going faculty, technology and mentor support
Curriculum continued

- D2L Delivery Platform
- Consistency in module design
- Well organized courses with specific clear expectations
- On-going technology support within the courses
- Mentor Circle
Faculty & Staff

- Doctoral level professors and Master Level adjuncts
- Travel to reservation sites required
- Required participation in student & mentor training
- No big egos
- Commitment & engagement
- Willingness & respect for the learner
Internship Collaboration Projects

- Bilingual Buffalo Curriculum for Crow children
- Two “Go Green” curricula for EC program, parents & community
- School-Parent-Community Healthy Partnership Program
- Northern Cheyenne substitute teacher training program
- Collaborative Breast feeding project for young mothers of Head Start children
- Parent Socialization educational program focusing on healthy nutrition and prevention of juvenile diabetes and obesity
Internship Collaboration continued

- Community Resource manuals for parents and teachers
- Sign Language Program for hearing impaired and language delayed children
- Blackfeet Transition Assessments
- Collaborative Suicide Prevention Project
- Blackfeet Chapter of the Montana Association for the education of Young Children
Accomplishments & Media

- 22 of 25 students completed a Bachelor Degree in Early Childhood education
- Average GPA was 3.02
- 24 students presented at the Montana Association for the Education Young Children Conference
- Student internship projects received accolades from Head Start /EC Directors, parents and communities
- Blackfeet student, Gloria Shirt, was inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
Accomplishments & Media Continued

- AED’s Brian Richmond identified the ECEDP program as Best Practice model
Accomplishments & Media continued

- Sean Cavanaugh, AED, Center for Educational Policy & Practice, interviewed Dr. Massey about the ECEDP Program to be published in AED Education Blog

- Mini Conference to be held at MSU Bozeman: Best Practice, Collaborative Partnership Models for the Education and Well Being of Native American Children, Families and Communities. September 2010.
Accomplishments & Media continued

- In addition to numerous informal presentations: 1 State presentation (MIEA), and 2 national presentations (NIEA & NIHSDA)
- Print media: Numerous articles related to the program and student accomplishments published at MSU, local and tribal newspapers
- ECEDP website & multimedia project
What do students think about ECEDP?

- Very satisfied with courses & appreciated the cultural relevance
- Appreciated the course module format as it helped to manage time
- Viewed the overall conceptual framework, consistency, tech equipment & internet, tech support and student support as valuable strengths of the program
Students continued...

- Very satisfied with books, readings & resources as they contributed to knowledge & application in the courses & classroom. Appreciated the up-to-date scholarly articles & research
- Shared the resources with teachers & administrators in their programs and communities
- Viewed instructors as fair, respectful, clear, consistent, understanding, kind & caring
- Felt it was very important for instructors to know the students and where they come from
- Positively viewed the Project Director’s Native background, knowledge & familiarity with Native communities
Students continued...

- Appreciated high standards and the mechanisms & support to reach them
- Appreciated the professional development opportunities (mtAEYC, MBI)
- Continually expressed gratitude for this unique opportunity to increase their knowledge, skills & obtain a degree
- One significant finding was: the ECEDP helped them to connect to other Native ECE teachers and programs in the state
What do mentors think about ECEDP?

- Positively viewed on-site meetings with students & mentors
- ECEDP enables students to remain and teach in their communities
- Viewed the Project Director’s Native background, knowledge & familiarity with Native communities as important
- ECEDP staff and support systems were cited as strengths
Mentors continued...

- Mentors felt that retention was greatly influenced by:
  - Strong Director and instructor support
  - Encouraging self-determination and wanting students to succeed
  - Support from other students and mentors across the state
  - Direct internet access and equipment for students
Mentors continued...

- Program Director and instructors who challenged all of us
- High expectations
- Program Directors & instructors served as role models and were motivating
- On-site visits to communities
- Feeling valued as an educator
Challenges

• English writing skills for some students
• Understanding that if students encounter a problem...there is a solution
• Some aspects of technology with internet service providers
• Program expansion to meet immediate needs
• Teacher salaries upon attainment of their degree
The ECEDP in pictures