



THE CSPD PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE  
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FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

# The Navajo NETWORK NEWS

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## What New Special Education Teachers Need: Results of a National Study

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In a recently published study, Billingsley, Carlson and Klein (2004) reported the results of a national survey of beginning special education teachers, those with five years or less of experience. In this survey of over 1,000 teachers, the researchers assessed working conditions and professional supports in an effort to help determine how best to retain special education teachers in their early career years.

Results have implications for Education Line Officers, administrators and other school staff as schools and Agencies seek to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel.

Some recommendations from the results of this study include:

- 1) Systematic support and responsive orientation programs for all beginning special education teachers. While some of the teachers reported a mentoring program, the quality and effectiveness of such programs was not clear or consistent. A responsive, coordinated effort to support new teachers is recommended;
- 2) Support and orientation is essential for new teachers, especially when many special education teachers are not fully certified in the areas in which they are working. Informal support from administrators and other veteran teachers is very important.
- 3) Working conditions must be carefully designed for new teachers, in order to help insure retention. This includes

appropriate workload and support with paperwork and other non-teaching duties. When administrators and other school staff have a clear understanding of the role of special educators, they are better able to craft these working conditions.

- 4) More in depth inquiry with individual teachers will better determine individual needs as well as a systematic approach to supporting new teachers in the local school.

Because recruitment and retention of special educators has been a concern for educational entities nationwide, including those on the Navajo Nation, attention to these recommendations at a policy making and administrative level, as well as among veteran teachers who are in a position to offer positive and personal support, may impact retention. Support to Agencies wishing to address this may be a CSPD priority. Creation of a formal mentoring program within Agencies and in schools may be a direction to consider as well. Guidelines for developing mentoring programs in special education are available on the *Council for Exceptional Children's* Web site (<http://www.cec.sped.org>).

The results of this study with beginning teachers are not unlike those reported for the successful retention of instructional/educational assistants. For more information about this study and how new special teachers can be supported, see the Spring 2004 issue of *Exceptional Children*.

**Billingsley, B., Carlson, E., & Klein, S. (2004). The working conditions and induction support of early career special educators. *Exceptional Children*, 70(3), 333-347.**

## CSPD at a Glance

On March 31, 2004, we completed the second quarter of this contract year, providing training and technical assistance in areas of Special Education on an agency level, and direct support to schools in corrective action. It has been a busy six months:

From October 1, 2003-March 31, 2004 through this CSPD contract:

- 1813 Individuals received technical assistance;
- 2778 People participated in individual training events both at an agency level and at school locations.
- 274 People have enrolled in courses we are offering for college credit, supporting personnel development of professional and paraprofessional staff in BIA funded schools on the Navajo Nation.

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### ...UPCOMING OPPORTUNITIES

*Developing the Whole Child*, an annual conference in Gallup, will be held April 28—29 (Wednesday and Thursday) at the Best Western Inn and Suites on the west side of town. If you are interested in presenting, please contact Stacey Hollebeek, planner, at [hollbeeks@hotmail.com](mailto:hollbeeks@hotmail.com) (505-722-9519 or 505-879-1757) with the following information:

Name, address, phone, email, subject for presentation, time needed for presentation (sessions will be 90 minutes this year by requests), small description of session(s), your title and one sentence description of yourself/job. Registration information will be coming soon.

## EPICS RECEIVES U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION GRANT

The EPICS Project (Education for Parents of Indian Children with Special Needs) has been funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) for a Community Parent Resource Center for New Mexico's American Indian families with special needs. The goals of the EPICS Project are 1) provision of training and information (parent rights) directly to Indian families; and 2) support to educational and health care providers to involve Indian families in health care and educational planning for their children and young adults.

EPICS assists American Indian parents whose children are ages birth to 21 and who have disabilities or special needs, live in New Mexico, and attend public schools or BIA schools.

For more information on the EPICS Project, please contact Martha Gorospe-Charlie at (505) 867-3396, or check out information on the Abrazos website at: [www.abrazosnm.org](http://www.abrazosnm.org)

### NAVAJO GLOSSARY ON THE WEB

If you have not already done so, please check out the Navajo language glossary of early childhood and special education terminology on our website at: <http://cdd.unm.edu/ec/cspd>. The glossary was originally developed through Project Na'nitin, a federal grant administered by Dr. Sherry Allison when she

worked here at UNM. The ICOP Project has put the glossary on the web with the auditory component where you can not only see the terms in English and Navajo, with definitions, but you can hear them as well when you click on them with your mouse. We have distributed several copies of the auditory glossary in CD-ROM format across the Navajo Nation as well. We will be sending out more... While you wait for yours, please check the website for ready access to Navajo terminology for families, educational staff, interpreters, and others who want to share information with Navajo speakers.

### CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS!

On April 24, Wingate High School will host a celebration for residential staff from Eastern Navajo Agency and Ft. Defiance Agency who have completed the residential training offered this year. Nearly 200 staff members finished the training, with 154 qualifying for college credit from UNM-Gallup. This innovated program involved classroom work one Saturday a month, on-site meetings to support skills in the residential settings, journaling and individual performance plans. The college credit earned can be applied to a degree program at UNM-Gallup for those pursuing continuing education. We will celebrate on the 24<sup>th</sup> with recognition, certificates, and of course LUNCH! Congratulations to staff, administrators and supporters who were a part of this effort.



## COLLABORATING FOR CHILDREN ON THE NAVAJO NATION CENTER

On March 11, several agencies joined together to share their success in collaboration on the Navajo Nation with attendees of the National FACE Conference in Albuquerque.

Rosemary Silversmith and Gloria Billie, Parent Training Coordinators of the Growing in Beauty Program of the Dine Division of Education, joined staff from the ELFS/Early Intervention Program in Gallup, representatives from Gallup-McKinley County Schools, and Charlotte Begay of the BIA-FACE Program at Wingate School, to talk about implementation of their transition agreement which describes how they work together to ensure that young children with disabilities and delays receive timely services in McKinley County in New Mexico.

Using a doll to symbolize the child, the presenters passed the doll from one provider or agency to another in a planned pattern. While Growing in Beauty may be the first to identify children for referral to early intervention and education programs, children and families may be eligible for a range of

services and supports from other agencies. The presenters described the shared efforts of the BIA-FACE Program and the public schools, where FACE might provide the least restrictive learning environment for young children through this BIA program, and public school staff come to the FACE program to provide therapies and other needed services.

The McKinley County group has been working on their transition agreement for the past year. In it the agencies described their own responsibilities, and also how they would work together, transitioning children from one service to another as they grow, much like they moved the doll symbolically during their presentation.

For more information about this transition agreement, or the parent-training program through Growing In Beauty, please contact Rosemary Silversmith at 505/722-1454.