

HeadStart — Teaching The Young Good Things

Where is it that three to five year olds go daily? Where is it that these same kids get two well balanced meals a day, learn good food, dental and cleanliness habits, and learn to help and do things for themselves?

HeadStart, that's where. Sixty-two young children anxiously await going to HeadStart daily. Any child living within the boundaries of the reservation is eligible to attend. Many of the children have had older brothers or sisters who attended and have often accompanied their mother when she went to be "mother helper", so they are aware of the good times at HeadStart. Anticipation is high when a child nears the age to go to "school."

HeadStart employs ten teachers, teachers assistants and aides, making the ratio six kids per teacher. The head teacher is responsible for planning all daily activities, for keeping all necessary records and for guidance and care of the children. The assistant teachers and the aides assist in all the activities planned.

Staff turnover rate is low. As the program has grown, the staff has increased, but some of the teachers have been there for 13 years. Dacotah Soules has been director of Early Childhood Education since September 1974, but has been involved with HeadStart since its origination in 1965.

Children who attend HeadStart are encouraged to develop independence in the self-help skills such as hand washing, brushing their teeth, and serving and cleaning up after themselves at the table. The children are also encouraged to say "please" and "thank you", use napkins and chew with their mouths closed. The kids are provided with the opportunity to express their needs and feelings verbally, however, they are not encouraged to respond violently to another's act of violence. The children are never physically punished, but are removed from the area of activity and given another activity to perform.

One of the favorite of special events coming up soon is the childrens' own annual "Root Feast." The children dig, peel, dry and help cook their own roots and at the end of a week's preparation, the children play host for their parents and the senior citizens with a feast. The morning before the feast is spent dancing. They also have swimming and lunch in a restaurant planned for this spring.

For the past two years a pre-school developmental profile has been done on each child enrolled in the program. This provides the staff with information to use in making daily lesson plans. If the profile indicates a special need, the child is given a Denver Developmental test. If the results indicate a need for further attention, the child is referred to proper resource people such as a doctor, psychiatrist or speech pathologist.

Federal standards require 35 square feet per child - this exists at the Community Center, but the HeadStart-Day Care trailer is over-crowded. Hopefully, to alleviate this problem, a child care facility to accommodate HeadStart and Day Care will be built within the next four years.

The Tribes must match at least 20 percent of the grant awarded them by the Federal Government. (In reality, the Tribes pay almost 50 percent of the actual cost.) The program receives credit in matching funds in the amount of \$2.50 per hour for each hour of volunteer service. Rudy Clements and Jack Hunt wrote the first grant application for a HeadStart program in Warm Springs. They were funded and the first program started in 1965. At that time there were three teachers and nine youth aides.

Mrs. Soules, or Cody, as she is known, feels that "we have an excellent HeadStart program and the reason is that we have always had the complete support of the community, Council and tribal management. Without their whole-hearted support it would not have been possible to survive."



One of the favorite pastimes on the playground at HeadStart is the nine foot high "rocket". Not only does the structure offer exercise, but it also helps in developing coordination and motor skills. Cecile "CeCe" Suppah often assists children as some have problems navigating down the pole.

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Warm Springs is the only Indian HeadStart program currently being surveyed for a national HEW (Health, Education & Welfare) report on HeadStart.

Surveyors were here this week assessing the HeadStart program so as to better inform HEW Secretary Califano just what services are being offered for children who are attending HeadStart.

"It's not a programmatic survey," stated Anastasia Thompson, one of the assessers. "It's to show HEW what has been done and what is being done for the kids and their families. It's a general overview of the programs."

Two other programs in Washington and one in Idaho are being surveyed. Results of each individual survey will be kept confidential. All survey findings will be sent to the head Regional office and a national report will be made.



Artistic creativity is enhanced at HeadStart when the children are given the opportunity to paint. Merlin Tom and Melvin Scott, Jr. exhibited their talent not only on the easel but on themselves as well.

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A good dental routine is established at HeadStart, along with many other good hygiene habits. Bernice Mitchell assists James Plympton (center) and Jason Rabbi (right) by applying toothpaste to their brushes.

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When asked about parent participation, Cody said that "we have about the same amount of volunteer help in the classroom as we did last year. This year, however, we have more attending parent meetings and we have more parents interested in and aware of what their children are learning in the program." She added that they have more parents attending the teacher parent conferences and expressing their needs and concerns in regard to their child's overall development. "The parents appear to have well-defined goals and objectives for themselves and for their children," she noted.

Warm Springs was aware of

the need for a pre-school experience for their children before HeadStart came into existence. A cooperative kindergarten was formed by a group of interested parents and community members in September 1963.

As far as what the kids think about the HeadStart experience, they think it's great to go to school like the big kids - it's a great ego booster. They feel grown up and have something in common with nearly every other child their age on the reservation. If the kids happen to run into one another at the store a warm welcome is given. Eyes twinkle and a special connection is made - "I've seen you at HeadStart!"