



## Transcript of NCSET Conference Call Presentation

### Expanding the Circle: Respecting the Past, Preparing for the Future: A Summer Program and Curriculum to Support American Indian Students in Transition

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presented by:

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**MS. PETERSON:** It's 1:00 and I think that Jean and Jen have a lot to share today. So, I think we'll get started. And I – my name is Kris Peterson and I work for the National Center on Secondary Transmission at the University of Minnesota. And I am just here to facilitate today and welcome all of you participants who are there and people who come on as time goes on.

The topic today that we're talking about is a new curriculum that Jean and Jen have worked on that is Expanding the Circle, Respecting the Past, Preparing for the Future. And it was developed specifically for American Indian students. And they will tell you more about the history, the – all the different steps that went into it and some of the things of how it's being used today.

Our particular format is that for about 35 to 45 minutes both Jean and Jen will present information to you. I'll ask a few questions and they will talk about this topic, and then we'll leave the remaining 20 – 15 to 20 minutes for questions. So, if you do have your mute buttons on, make sure you take those off when we get to the question-and-answer part. And it just works easier that way for the flow because we only have an hour. So, if you think of a question as they're presenting, if you could just jot that down on a piece of paper and then save it for the last few minutes.

Jean, could you tell our listeners a little about

the history that's led to the development of this curriculum and what was the purpose of some of the previous and current projects?

**MS. NESS:** This curriculum has – is really a – has been a work in progress since probably 1995 when we started our first federally funded project through the U.S. Department of Education OS-ERS – Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. We started looking at the needs that American Indian high school kids had and the lack of preparedness that they left high school with and tried to look at the transition skills that would be helpful to those students to help them prepare, first of all, to be retained in high school, to find out enough about themselves to be interested enough about what was important to them personally to want to stay in high school, graduate from high school and plans to attend post-secondary or a career that was a good match for them. So, that was the start about in 1995 when we started our first federally funded project.

And as I'm sure you all know that one federal builds upon another one. And we kept expanding this notion. And since 1995 we worked with about probably 400 high school Indian kids in Minnesota. And for the summer programs that we run in general – I'll talk a little bit more about those in a little bit – but probably about 400 Indian high school kids doing the school year program. We've done a

lot of training with – through home school liaisons throughout Minnesota. Probably well over 100 have had – have received extensive training from us.

Our collaborators in this project and in developing the curriculum have been, of course, the federal government, tribal governments throughout Minnesota, our Minnesota Department of Education, which is called the Department of Children, Families & Learning, the Indian Education Department within that.

We had community involvement from high school students who were our readers, parent committee members throughout Minnesota, home school liaison staff in the – with American Indian high school students. Actually, we've also been field testing the activities in the curriculum since probably the first summer in 1996 because we started doing activities with high school students, summer programs, that we thought would be positive, very interactive activities for specifically culturally-related for Indian students and have built on those really over the years to have as a final product this curriculum.

So, the purpose of the curriculum and the projects that we've done, which Kris just asked what that was, has again been to promote retention of high school Indian kids through their personal exploration of learning styles, career assessment and so on, to match their aptitudes, their values and their interests and come up from that with a post-secondary plan that matches them.

**MS. PETERSON:** And, I apologize, that was Jean Ness. I didn't really introduce her fully. And she is the DIRECTOR of this project and has been for – since it's inception, right, Jean?

And Jen is next. And she's project coordinator.

**MS. PETERSON:** she will talk about what the general model of these has been.

**MS. HUISKEN:** Over the years, we've really looked at developing summer program models. The way that the grants are written and the projects are funded are to provided summer programs. So, each of the different communities throughout Minnesota have had different variations on summer programs, but that really has been kind of where we've been heading in the last two years. With the

curriculum coming out, we've started looking and talking to some of the sites and the schools in the area about really trying to implement the curriculum into more of a year-round model, incorporating it into what they're already doing in the high school curriculum. That's really been one of the areas that we've been talking with some of the schools about doing that.

The curriculum requirement is 45 ...

**MS. NESS:** 48.

**MS. HUISKEN:** ... 48 hours for the students to complete to receive certificate of completion for doing the program. It can be anywhere from doing them – a lot of the summer schools have done them in the schools. What we really try to promote is that the programs are held at a college setting, post-secondary education setting that the students can experience that throughout the course of the program.

Really at the base of what the models are talking about as far as what Jean and I do is the train-the-trainer model, basically being that over the course of the three years of the project the way they are right now, that we work with them at the beginning to train them on the curriculum, train – help them set up a summer program to really get it off the ground, and then over the course of the year support them in their programs and further development in helping them to sustain the programs. But it really is their program. The trainers are trained from the different sites and they take the program and run with it from that.

**MS. PETERSON:** Thanks, Jen.

Jean, what's been the impact on these – this project and the previous projects?

**MS. NESS:** Well, I've already kind of talked about the number of students around Minnesota that have been affected and have been participated in the program over the years.

One of the questions we always get is, is there any longitudinal information or studies on these students that we started with in 1996. And unfortunately we don't have that because that was never the nature of any of our federally funded projects. They've been three-year projects and once they end we only hear through word of mouth in the communities what has happened to the students. We know that in our first grant our first project about

20 of the students that we worked with went on to post-secondary education. But I think not knowing you who are listening and your backgrounds and what your experience is, but we know that nationally about 57 percent of American Indian kids finish high school. And out of that, about 14 percent enter post-secondary and out of that about four percent graduate from college.

In the 2000 U.S. census, about 65 percent of the American Indian are Alaska native folks over 25 have a high school diploma or higher and about 9.5 percent of that group has a bachelor's degree or higher. That's nationally. In Minnesota we had a report called the State of Students of Color 2001 Report that was put out by the Minnesota Minority Education Partnership, Incorporated. And according to that in '99, 35 percent of our American Indian high school students in Minnesota dropped out of high school and 42 percent were high school graduates. So, that's kind of the way it looks in Minnesota.

And I also know that in Minnesota of those 1,000 American Indian college students in 2000-2001 that received American Indian scholarships for college through Minnesota Indian Fund, only 100 completed the course of study that they requested funding for.

So, the long and the short of all of those numbers is, I'm sure, it becomes of no surprise to any of our listeners that there's a great lack of preparedness for post-secondary schools. And the decline and the core of our focus and our activities to try to turn that around and give American Indian high school kids reasons and desire and experience and knowledge more about themselves and their community and by having an education and bringing that back to their communities can mean not only for them but for their communities and American Indians throughout the country.

Some of the challenges within all of that have been that we have an enormous dropout rate. We have the historical issues of boarding schools and the historical issues of health issues in the American Indian community that have affected our students in their decision making. In a meeting at our Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College yesterday and our retention committee meeting talking about in

the tribal college setting, which is classic for any Indian kids and folks in school is when there are family issues or family needs those always come first and education does not come ahead of that. So, being able to work that together and figure out ways as an institution, such as the Tribal College or in our program, ways to facilitate helping people with those challenges that they have in their lives but still be able to stay in school or complete what they want to complete, even if they have to drop out and come back, to know that they can always come back and they need to come back.

The rewards have been the enormous satisfaction people have had with the curriculum just in the last couple months since it's come out. I don't know that we've mentioned, but this curriculum was published the end of September 2002, so it is very fresh, very new. If you feel like you haven't heard anything about it, don't feel bad because it's right on the market now, coming out from our institute here. And it's – we're doing training on it around the state with Indian directors and leaders and curriculum specialists. And we're getting an enormous sense that we're on target with this curriculum.

The rewards have also been bumping into students and adults that I've worked with over the years and seeing that their lives have changed and they have been able to make choices. And those choices have been good for them and their families and their communities.

So, I think we're on the right track. It's a very long-term track, as you all know, I'm sure. And we're pleased with the direction we've been going.

**MS. PETERSON:** Great. Jen, can you tell us about some of the components of the curriculum?

**MS. HUISKEN:** Sure. Jean's made several references, and Kris as well, about the actual curriculum that's come out of all of these projects and programs and development over the course of the last few years. What we really did in putting the curriculum together was to actually have something out of all these programs that people could use either in their schools, through summer programs, through whatever way they really felt like it fit with their communities. We'll talk more later about how people are actually using it because it's actually been quite

a surprise what some of the variations that people have come up with. It's rather exciting.

But really what we talk about in the curriculum there are four themes. The first theme is really a piece on discovery. Jean has talked about the fact that what we're trying to do and trying to talk with students about is that they need to look at a plan that fits for them in their goals, their family, their community and what makes sense for them. The first piece is looking at that discovery. There's a lot of time spent on social support, who in their life is supporting them, whether that be in school, in work, as they're preparing to make their transition out of high school, who really is a positive support in their life. A lot of students we talked with – it's interesting just getting them to talk about social support because their circles expand as they start to think about other people in their lives or their communities that are supporting them.

We spend time, too, talking about the family connection and the community connection, the importance of how/where they fit with their family and their community impacts their transition as well. We have very interesting discussions with students who are coming from all different types of family variations and how that impacts their transition.

I think students really look at kind of their own kind of interpersonal – intrapersonal actually pieces of what are their learning styles, looking at their cultural history kind of as far as for themselves, the development of that, how they've come to know that and apply that to their transition. We look at positive self-esteem and the confidence to know that you can have a transition from high school. It's amazing to me how so many of the kids when we're talking with them the idea that there is life after high school is a revelation to them during the course of the program.

The other thing that we spend time on in the first theme is how to respond to change. So, a lot of interesting discussion on this particular unit during the development. We talk with students about the importance of humor. We talk to students about how to manage stress. We talk to them about how to deal with peer pressure and how to cope with different things that are happening in their lives – an-

ger management, dealing with grief. We had – like I said, we had a lot of discussion in the communities and with students about the fact that the curriculum is not designed to be the all-encompassing piece on dealing with anger management. Really, the assumption that we have in some of the themes – or some of the units is that students who have already had exposure to drug and alcohol, substance abuse type programs or different people from the communities or the schools will have come in and talk to them about gangs and violence and things like that. This has really been taking some of those issues that are coming up for many of the high school students and seeing how that applies to their transition that the unit is here to do.

After we wrap up the first theme of the discovery, then we head into a theme called the framework. And really, this is more the nuts and bolts, the skills that kids would need to be able to make the transition. We talk with them about goal settings – realistic goal setting, how do you follow through to meet your goals. We talk with them about self-advocacy. It's been another unit that we had a lot of discussion in the communities about. And really the way that we're looking at the concept of self-advocacy in this particular curriculum and in talking with kids about transition, looking at how do you develop your leadership skills that when you're leaving high school and you're experiencing... how do you determine how you're going to advocate for yourself, your family, your community by the choices that you're making. We spend a lot of time talking in that theme about that.

We then also talk about skills such as problem solving in organizational skills, communication skills, talking with students about non-verbal communication. It's always an interesting conversation. And then we end that theme talking about diversity awareness, talking to students about as you head out after high school how do you handle a diverse world.

The last theme then really gets into the exploration of their choices. We talk to kids about really kind of coming up with what your vision is for after high school and then really in-depth exploration of post-secondary education, career development skills and then also a piece on military training. That

theme in and of itself has been the base of a lot of the programs, really getting students to look at what their options are and what fits best with them as they're coming up with their post-secondary plans.

The final theme is called the reflection. And that really is just kind of bringing everything all together, having students reflect on the experience, having them kind of wrap everything up in their mind about what they've gotten out of the program and how it relates to them, and then sharing that with their families, their community. And as we talk more about how some of the programs have used the curriculum, we'll talk more about how different programs celebrate that last theme.

One of the things that Jean and I tried to really – well, many pieces that we looked at when we were developing the curriculum lot of input of from the communities and school districts and people actually working on a day to day basis with students that are getting ready to go through their transition was really looking at what are some core elements of the curriculum that we wanted to cover. Student outcomes are included for every lesson in the curriculum. There's a lesson plan and actual activity for each lesson that's in the curriculum with student outcomes. There's also a chart – since we're in Minnesota, we've aligned the activities that are in the curriculum with the Minnesota graduation standards. As we started talking to people about this nationally, the names of the graduation standards may be a little bit differently, but a lot of people have been able to adapt that to what their state graduation standards are.

There's a very heavy emphasis on reflection and discussion. A lot of the activities that kids think are a lot of fun and they get to do them. But really what we're talking to them about is how do these activities fit with their transition, how does it impact them and their choices that they're making.

One of the other elements that's in the curriculum is everything is self-contained. We've – in putting this actual curriculum together, we talked a lot about the fact that we wanted people to be able to have the curriculum and then be able to really just work from there. Everything that you would need for the program is – requires activities or handouts or photocopies. You'd be able to just do that, and

then the other materials that you would need. But everything is contained in the curriculum.

Another element of the curriculum is what we call the Onaakonah system. It's a portfolio system specifically related to Indian high school students as they're transitioning high school. It covers anywhere from very... to accomplishments to – it really is a filing system for students to get organized around their transition.

The final piece about the curriculum is there are a lot of curricula out there that talk about transition and there are a lot of – a lot have a good first year experience in college. But really what we found and the response that we've had from people is that this curriculum in and of itself is unique in that it's really looking at a transition of a very particular group of people as they're preparing for life after high school.

**MS. NESS:** And if I can just throw in there a couple of those pieces that Jen was talking about.

The student outcomes having the lesson plan being very clearly laid out and within that lesson plan at the end of each having a reflection and discussion time. We really designed these very clearly and simply with the thought in mind that a lot of the people that would be using this curriculum are not teacher-trained people. We – a lot of the folks in Minnesota who work with high school Indian kids are what we call home school liaisons. And they're people who are very well known in the communities – know the families, know the kids, know the cultural needs, but don't necessarily have that four year degree in teaching. So, these are very clean, clear, simple formats that someone can pick up and use without feeling that they have to have a four-year degree to do them.

And another piece that I think is incredibly unique about the curriculum, which this makes it very hard that you're hearing us and not seeing us because this is a beautiful, beautiful, visually developed curriculum. There are graphic designs throughout the curriculum and with the Onaakonah system, the portfolio system, that had been designed by an Ojibwa artist. And it's just so visually appealing. It's just lovely. And we picked the graphics that weren't so Ojibwa designed that are more – that would be a more appeal to a national Indian

audience because the focus of the curriculum, even though we've been using it mostly in Minnesota, was a national design. And we have heard – we present it on the curriculum at the National Indian Education Conference, the NIEA Conference in Albuquerque in October. And that was definitely a national audience we were speaking to. And we definitely got the sense that the graphics and the design and the content was appealing to a wide variety of tribes.

**MS. PETERSON:** Can both of you talk a little bit about how it's been implemented in the state of Minnesota or any other place?

**MS. HUISKEN:** Sure. As I mentioned earlier, one of the things that's been a very pleasant surprise is that people are – now that it's out a lot of people have been involved in the development of the curriculum and in the projects. And now that it's out, seeing how different people can take the same piece of work and modify it to the needs that they have with their students in their communities has been a really wonderful gift that's come out of the projects. We have anywhere from urban American Indian high school settings where they're using this as far as a post-secondary preparation class where they're getting high school credit, or we have another situation where it could be a more rural charter school is using this as part of a year-round curriculum and are looking at obtaining college credit for kids that are completing the curriculum and the program. So, it really has been what people can take from it and how they adapt it to their situation.

**MS. NESS:** We – one of the ways that the curriculum was implemented in one of our summer sites was to actually develop a weeklong 24 hour a day live-in on site program at Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College where last summer we had four reservations come together and students – I think we had about 30 students who lived in the dorm for a week. They didn't know each other from the other reservations. And the curriculum was developed in a model that was kind of a 24-hour a day thing. There were day classes, but then at night in the dorms along with drum groups practicing and doing things. Students had homework from the curriculum. They were working together in developing – looking up Web sites and career interest

areas, college interest areas. It was quite an elaborate setting and something that just doesn't happen where kids from so many different reservations will get together like that. So, that was a real positive and kind of unique way of implementing the curriculum.

Another thing that Jen doesn't even know yet, but yesterday when I was at the tribal college we got court's approval for developing the curriculum as a college course at Fond du Lac Tribal & Community College to be a below level 1000 course, which means it would be hopefully – my hope and dream is that it will become a course that's sort of like that freshman year experience course, that in my dream world everybody would be required to take before they enter the tribal college because it really gets people at any age level, not just high school kids but any level, that under-preparedness, gives people a chance to really get themselves organized and situated and really focused on thinking in terms of a college environment. So, that's a step forward in that. And next fall's that they – course for high school kids to gain college credit as a college course.

**MS. HUISKEN:** It too – it has expanded itself outside of even the high school setting as well. We spoke with a woman a few days ago who is actually – they want to take – have an in-service on the curriculum because their kids are high school students and they want to know what they need to know to support their students as they get ready for the transition out of high school. It's one of the pieces that we've heard from a number of people is how can we set this with what the needs are that we have. And people really can do it. It's a very adaptable tool that students and parents and adults in the community can really use to meet the needs of the transition of their high school students.

**MS. NESS:** It's been fun to watch and hear. We've been involved in all the summer programs over the years, even though we're university people. We're out there playing and having a great time with the kids. And what we've heard over and over from different sites is these kids will start the first day resentful that they're coming. They're there because ...

**MS. HUISKEN:** In the summer.

**MS. NESS:** ... in the summer. Their parents

think they should be there or some teacher talked them into it and they've only come because they know they get a \$200 stipend at the end of the program, which I don't recommend, by the way, but that's the way this has been going. And they don't want to know anything about the future or anything. And then somehow somewhere during the week they start getting it and understanding that these activities are about in their future. It's not something that some teacher's shoving down their throat. And they make those connections with other kids in the program that are doing the same thing.

And the other thing that's so unique about this is it's totally a group of Indian kids going through this together. And most all of our kids come from public high schools where they don't have the opportunity to work just as a group of Indian kids looking at their future goals together very often. So, they end up the week with new friends, new connections, new goals, and they really feel very, very good about themselves.

And were you going to talk about the end of the week, some of the things that happen? Yes.

**MS. HUISKEN:** Because you're reminding me. One of the pieces that I talked about when I was summarizing the 600 page piece of work here is that really at the end of the programs we encourage the trainers and the communities to celebrate the fact that the students have completed the program. We have gone from – anywhere from traditional feast to a picnic in a park. Last summer we had a group. It was their first year completing the program. And they were kind of on their track to have the traditional dinner at the end of the week and invite some families and invite elders and community members in. And the kids stopped them throughout the course of the week and said that they wanted to plan the celebration themselves. And what they did in putting this together is they picked activities from the week that they had done that they found particularly enlightening or purposeful for them and they actually – when they had the celebration, they had the parents and the community members and the elders doing the activities. The students were leading the activity that they had done earlier in the week.

And basically as people were walking out at the end of the day, community members said that, "This is great. Our kids are invested in their future. Our kids are looking at what their lives are going to be like when they're finished with school, the high school experience." So, it really has been a wonderful experience and the programs have shown us a lot more things in the curricula that we can do with them I think we initially anticipated.

**MS. NESS:** Yesterday I was in a parent committee meeting up in northern Minnesota and I was discussing a new grant proposal that we're starting with them in their community. And one of the parent committee members stopped me and said, "Wait a minute, is this anything like that program that my son and daughter have been attending at the tribal college in the summer?" And I said, "Yes, it kind of springs off of that." And she said, "Boy, that was a fabulous program. My kids just loved it. It was just the best." And I thought, "Boy, that makes it all worthwhile just to hear how valuable she felt it was." And, of course, she'd also been involved in that end of the program ceremony to see exactly the whole group and what it had meant to the group.

So, you know, we make tiny steps some days and big steps other days. But we're on the track to, I think, something that's very valuable. And as Jen did say, it is a 600 and some page curriculum. It's heavy. It's big. One of the reactions we get from the community when we give presentations about it is, "God, are we supposed to go through every page and do every thing in this?" And it's really designed to be able to be used over multiple years. There may be a concept like problem solving that there's several different activities around problem solving. So, you pick the one that fits the group that you're with and next year you do a different one or at a different time you do a different one with a different group of kids. So, we give lots of opportunities and options. And, to tell you the truth, this could've been easily 1,000 pages. We had so many ideas. And as Jen said earlier on, this isn't the be all or end all of any of those different areas like problem solving or – plus I'm sure you all are aware that there are lots of out there that you can buy and add to this in a study strategy area or a problem solving area or

a self-advocacy area. We picked what we thought worked the best, what we liked, what we've used. And ...

**MS. HUISKEN:** What the kids responded to.

**MS. NESS:** ... what the kids responded to. Right. And then on top of that, we made it as appropriate as we possibly could for this group of kids, and knowing full well that people will add and change and adapt to it. And that's what it's all about.

**MS. PETERSON:** I just wanted to emphasize that it is – visually is just a beautiful work of art also. And when I paged through it – and I haven't worked with Jean and Jen on this project – I kept saying, "Yes, yes, this is like great for everybody." And so, can you talk about that a little bit? Is it just for Native American students or is it for – could it be used for kids with disabilities, for other cultures?

**MS. NESS:** Well, you know, we have said that it is – it's basic skills that everybody needs to know to make the transition to post-secondary or to careers or to the military, a very important, straightforward stuff. We've added cultural components to make it especially appropriate for this group of kids, but it only adds and enhances to any other population that would use it. So, I wouldn't hesitate sharing it with any other population who's looking for a new or different curriculum and transition. And – so, any of those groups you're talking about it would be just fine for.

**MS. HUISKEN:** There's nothing that – it's been a situation as we put the curriculum together of what is kind of the overall picture or the overall pieces that are needed for high school students to make the transition. And as Jean said, there are times when there are a lot of culture-specific or need-specific for this population of students, but they're basic skills and understandings that anybody making a transition out of high school will. It's just trying to do it in a more supportive, culturally relevant environment, whether that be through the programs or the use of a curriculum that involves this group of kids.

**MS. NESS:** And we want to make sure, because I'm sure at this point you're really wondering how do we find out more about this or see it or whatever. We are distributing the curriculum through our

publications office here at the Institute on Community Integration. The curriculum itself is \$55. And as Jen said earlier, each of the activities is within that curriculum that you would use with students. So, you just pull those out and photocopy them so you don't have to buy student manuals or anything.

And with each curriculum comes one set of the Onaakonah or the portfolio system, which is really for your reference, to buy additional copies of that filing system so that each student would have their own would be – is \$7 apiece. And those are available individually.

And do people have the mailing address? OK.

**MS. PETERSON:** We'll give them the Web site to order through that, when we're finished. I would like to, at this time, invite anyone who has any questions, comments to please feel free to address them to both Jean or Jen or either one. And if you would just identify who you are and what state you're from if you have a question. That would be really helpful for us.

**MR. MILES:** My name is David Miles. I'm a – I work with the Nezperce tribe. I'm a Nezperce tribal member and I'm the director of the Nezperce Vocational Rehabilitation Services. But I've always been a real strong advocate of education. I've been fortunate. I have two – all of my children are older and I have two children that have – one just received her Masters and she works at the local school district here. And then I have a son that he has his Bachelor's, but he's a natural resources manager here. But I've always – and I think they've always seen that I've always pushed education. I've always made it a point that education needs you somewhere, but that's not always the case for most Indian students. And we find it a real problem.

But I've seen some articles in our local paper. I just – the paper that hit today was this woman – a Hispanic woman out of Mabton, Washington. She said this was her – the early '70s that this was kind of a subtle form of discrimination when a counselor told her that maybe you should just go into become a secretary. And she just finished graduating with a law degree just recently. She was just telling – she just kind of brought that up, but this goes back 20 years, almost 30 years, I guess, in the early '70s.

And then also in "The Tribune" we have



– through Northwest Indian College there were 12 Indian women that graduated with their teaching degrees, and they never had to go to Washington State. I don't know if you know where Washington State is. That's in Pullman, Washington. It's not a very good place to live. It's cold and whatever. But these women all went to this Northwest Indian College in – above Seattle and they said they never had to go to Pullman and they all – but they went there for their graduation this past Sunday, I guess. But they went -they call themselves “WSU Graduates Cohort of 12 Indian Teachers”. So, I guess it gets back to that – I think when I heard in that discussion or presentation about getting the young people together and forming groups and taking on those challenges together. I think that's really do-able.

But those are just my comments.

**MS. HUISKEN:** I think that's true. We've had students that come into programs where you have some student coming in from families such as yours where you are promoting education. They're aware of their options and exploring to see what fits for them. And when those students are connecting with other students in the program that maybe that isn't where they're coming from, it opens the communication about possibilities. And it's always amazing. You always have kids coming out of...that “I never knew I could do this or be this.” That in and of itself has been one of the best successes, I think, is that kids are actually looking and knowing that they have an option, because that's not always communicated very well.

**MR. MILES:** That's true. And a lot of our – especially Indian males, like my son – he was fortunate to play on the basketball team. And they went 50 and oh in his last two years of high school. And he says that was my big thing was basketball and he says if I would've realized education was important I would've probably put more time into it. And he didn't realize it till he got to University of Idaho and he realized what he missed in high school, I guess, as far as education.

**MS. NESS:** But basketball was a great retention strategy

**MS. HUISKEN:** That's great. What it is, is getting students to see that there's a purpose for them

to go to school, there's a purpose for them to show up at high school, that there's something beyond that 12th grade year. I mean, we have students that are struggling to get through that 12th grade year. And then to start talking to them about now you can go to school longer, but to look at what your other options are and that they're educated consumers of what's out there. We see that that's missing a lot. I think a lot of it has to do with a lot of historical pieces and everything, but it's really getting them to see that there are options.

**MR. MILES:** Yes. I plan to bring this up. I missed this morning. We have in our local school district where my daughter – one of my daughters work – she works as a multi-cultural, I guess, educator. And she looks at things like curriculum. And they meet at the last Wednesday of each month and they – from the community members like myself and other – within the tribal organization, they can attend. And we talk education and like what you're talking about. So, I'll bring it up at the January meeting because I missed it this morning, but I'll probably get more information on this curriculum by that time.

**MS. NESS:** Yes. We would certainly want to get you brochures before then.

**MS. URBINA:** Good afternoon. This is Marta Urbina with Raising Special Kids in Phoenix, Arizona. We're one of two parent training and information centers in our state. And my question – actually, I have a number of questions.

This program was utilized, as you mentioned, with high school students. Any particular grade level that you all started with is my first question?

And then second, realizing that the children are still minors in high school, can you speak briefly to how you nurtured or developed family interest and support so that the students did successfully participate in this program?

**MS. NESS:** Sure. The grade level that we focus on – well, in – is really grades 10 through 12. And partly the reason it's not nine through 12, although it should be kindergarten through 12, is that when we were working under the direction of a federally funded three year grant we wanted to be able to have sophomore, junior, seniors and then by the end of the grant they were seniors and we could

show what was happening over that three year period. So, although I wouldn't necessarily recommend that as a model, if you didn't have any federal controls around that, that is what ours has been typically. That's not to say that we haven't had some 9th graders or some younger folks involved. But – so that's that answer.

In terms of bringing in parent involvement and – whether these kids were minors or not, in an American Indian community it's just so important. We're not just working with the student. We're working with the environment from which they come and the values and the feelings that those family members and community members may have either positively like David or negatively, perhaps those who have had very bad experiences in school. And the last time they set foot in a school was when they were a student and maybe dropped out at 16. So, we know that if we're going to make along term impact on retention and higher education with these kids we have to also include parents and family members as part of every activity that we do that we can include them in so that they can participate and get a new outlook on higher education and the educational opportunities that we're suggesting as possibilities for their students.

**MS. HUISKEN:** Another strategy that's worked really well, I think, as far as the projects have gone is because it is a train the trainer model, a lot of the trainers that we have been working with for the summer programs or the year-round programs are people that are already connected with the families and the community. So, it's not you come to the university. We have got this great thing. We want you to try it. We spend a lot of time working with the trainers in the community before the programs get off the ground. And they have those connections with the families and with the students. These are people that are working with these kids on a daily basis. There's a trust that's established there. We know going into that that takes a long time. But to make the program really work and get it off the ground, that was a strategy that worked very, very well for us.

**MS. URBINA:** Follow-up question from Marta again. Can you identify what some of these roles were when you talk about people from the com-

munity and people that the youth trusted? I mean, what role? I mean, are we talking peers? Are we talking educators? Family members?

**MS. HUISKEN:** Well, kind of a combination really. I mean, a lot of the people that we've talked with when we went to communities, we were trying to identify people that were in a day-to-day role with the students. We have anywhere from high school guidance counselors to home school liaisons, youth workers that are in the community that are working for the tribes, really trying to connect with who a good person is.

The other piece during the actual program is trying to pull in elders from the community, different adults who are working or who are going to school, who have completed school, to come in and work with the students on some of the activities, kind of in a role model type of piece. Now, some of the other programs that's been going for a while is there are kids that come back and talk to other students about, "I'm in school now. Stick with this. Make your plan because it helps." So, it's really kind of finding who in the community fits with what the need is.

**MS. NESS:** We also have had very often in the summer program one of the activities we do pretty extensively is invite college representatives to come in from specific types of technical college, community college, tribal college, state college, university and talk about what their college is like. And we try to have the American Indian representative from the cultural center or whatever in those schools come. And what tends to happen is we say will you come and talk to the students about what your school could offer Indian kids. And they do that. But what they do is come and tell their story. And their story tends to be a lot like stories kids can relate to – I had a rugged time as a teenager, I dropped out of school, I got into every kind of naughty behavior there was and when I was 25 or 30 I decided maybe I'm not going to do that anymore. And here they are 40 some year old men and they're college degreed and they're talking about why they are doing what they're doing and why they came back to doing this because of their community, their need to get back to the community.

And when I first realized that that's what was

happening, I realized that on the one hand the value of talking about the college was great, but the fact that they were talking about their life – and they were role modeling for these kids. And those are oftentimes a lot of the folks we have who are making an impact too.

Does that answer your question, Marta?

**MS. URBINA:** It does. Thank you so much.

**MS. PETERSON:** Are there any other questions?

**MS. JOHNSON:** This is Marilyn Johnson from Laguna Akomo Rehab Program.

**MS. PETERSON:** Marilyn, you got our messages.

**MS. JOHNSON:** Yes, I did. I also shared the BIA special ed advisory board.

When you talk about the observations you made that the youth exhibited maybe limited preparedness for post high school options, can you describe a little bit more what you saw? And secondly, wanted to ask you if you might send us some information. We have our next advisory board meeting in the Riverside area in January and I'd like to share that information with our board members.

**MS. NESS:** Information about the curriculum or about the statistics?

**MS. JOHNSON:** About the curriculum.

**MS. NESS:** OK, you bet.

**MS. HUISKEN:** Sure.

**MS. NESS:** Yes. Do we have a way of having those peoples' addresses right away.

**MS. PETERSON:** When you signed in, did they take just your names or did they also take contact information?

**MS. JOHNSON:** No, they just ...

**MR. MILES:** Our name.

**MS. JOHNSON:** ... wanted our names. I can give you the information when we get done.

**MS. PETERSON:** That would be great.

**MS. NESS:** OK. And you, too, David, so we can get that stuff to you right away.

**MR. MILES:** OK.

**MS. HUISKEN:** If anybody else ...

**MS. NESS:** Yes, anybody else out there in TV land. Marilyn, let me just make sure I understand. You want to know about post secondary options?

**MS. JOHNSON:** Well, no. I wanted to ask you

when you said that there – you had observed a limited preparedness by the students. Can you describe a bit further what you had observed that seemed to be addressed by the curriculum.

**MS. NESS:** A lot of things. That could be a whole other teleconference probably.

**MS. JOHNSON:** Probably could, yes.

**MS. NESS:** Quite honestly, I think it depends on where each student is coming from. Quite honestly and frankly, one of the biggest things is hearing from kids that they did not know that they could go to school. I didn't know that I could have a job. I didn't know – this is what I want to do, but I didn't think that I was smart enough to do this or I never knew how to go about doing that. Those are some really big flags that go up when we're in the program.

And a total lack of awareness about post-secondary, that there's – post-secondary education is such a broad range. And what the difference is between going to a tribal college where you could stay in your neighborhood and stay close to home or a community college or a technical college. Now, those three schools in Minnesota are open enrollment, which means all they have to have is a GED or a high school diploma, and then talking about those versus those that are a little bit more competitive or a little bit more competitive than that and what the difference is. Because kids will hear somebody went off to the Harvard Indian Project at Harvard University. And they thing, "Well, that sounds cool." And then they'll hear about somebody who learned jewelry making somewhere. But they don't understand the huge gamut and what that means.

They have no clue about what their personal interests are and how their personal interests fit into an academic setting or maybe not, maybe an apprenticeship setting. They don't understand that maybe they don't have to go to higher ed. They don't know anything about military as an option, as a broad option, and to explore that as a customer. I'm a customer and I want to ask the recruiter specific questions about what would the military do for me. They don't see that as an option. The whole piece about self-advocacy is so huge. My right to know and understand and ask – gosh, Marilyn, it's

the whole darn curriculum.

**MS. JOHNSON:** That sounds familiar similar to what we experience. Other aspects are sometimes people don't get their driver's licenses right away or maybe get them until they're much later or they don't realize how – what an impact it has when you get a DUI or DWI. Yes, that sounds a lot – that sounds similar to the challenges we face too.

**MS. HUISKEN:** As we talked earlier, too, one of the themes in that discovery piece, the unit on responding to change, there's actually an activity in there that talks exactly about that, as considering the consequences. You're going to be making choices at your age about what you're going to do with your life, and we're not here to say what's right or what's wrong or to make that call for you. But understand that when you're making the decisions that you're making there's consequences. It's not just for you. The consequence is for your children, for your family, for your community and for people that you've never met before. And it really – the light bulbs go on. They really get the fact that it's not just me. I mean, we're talking about 14 through 18 year olds where it's kind of hard to see outside of the immediate self. But it does, it connects with them.

**MS. NESS:** Marilyn, do you work with Gloria Yepa?

**MS. JOHNSON:** She works in the central office. Yes, she does.

**MS. NESS:** OK.

**MS. JOHNSON:** I don't work directly with her, but I'm on the board and she's within the administrative unit of BIA special ed.

**MS. NESS:** Well, if you have close connection to her geographically, she has a copy of the curriculum. And she was one of our readers.

**MS. JOHNSON:** Great. OK.

**MS. NESS:** So, that would be a quick way for you to see it.

**MS. JOHNSON:** OK. Good.

**MS. NESS:** She has a lot of brochures. We saw her in Albuquerque for NIEA. So, she has many, many brochures.

**MS. JOHNSON:** OK. Good. Well, I was there but I had to leave. We had a death in our family, so I stayed only for the first day.

**MS. NESS:** Thank you.

**MS. JOHNSON:** You're welcome.

**MS. KING:** This is Sara King in Moorhead, Minnesota. And we have a group of about 10 around the table. And several people are involved with kids at risk of dropping out of high school. Would you recommend that this curriculum be adapted and used for kids to try to help them set goals to stay in high school?

**MS. NESS:** Sure.

**MS. HUISKEN:** Absolutely.

**MS. NESS:** Not only would that be a good idea, we'll come up there and train them.

**MS. KING:** Wow, that'd be great. We'll take you up on it.

**MS. HUISKEN:** Pull out the table. We'll see you soon.

**MS. NESS:** Why don't you guys just call us?

**MS. HUISKEN:** Great. It is the advantage of maintaining one of the Minnesota – we travel within the state boundaries here.

**MS. KING:** Great. Wonderful. Thank you.

**MS. HUISKEN:** You're welcome.

**UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT:** Can you repeat the Web site or the phone number?

**MS. PETERSON:** Sure. The Web site is [www.NCSET.org](http://www.NCSET.org) and I'm going to give you this phone number, 612-624-2097

**MS. NESS:** Let me give our phone numbers too. This is Jean and I'm the director. It's 612-625-5322. My e-mail is [nessx008@umn.edu](mailto:nessx008@umn.edu). And Jen's information is ...

**MS. HUISKEN:** You can reach me by phone at 612 – 6437, and the e-mail is [huisk001@umn.edu](mailto:huisk001@umn.edu).

**UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT:** And that's where we can get information about looking at the program, right?

**MS. HUISKEN:** If you e-mail or call one of us, we can get your direct addresses and then we can send out brochures and have contact with you that way.

**MS. PETERSON:** If those of you that wanted to leave your phone number – I think it was David and Marta and Sara – do you want to do that right now?

**MR. MILES:** OK. My name is David Miles. And my phone number here in Idaho

is 208-843-7363 and my e-mail address is just davidm@nezperce.org

**MS. NESS:** Thanks, David. Marta?

**MS. URBINA:** Yes, thank you. phone number 602-242-4366, and e-mail is [info@raisingspecialkids.org](mailto:info@raisingspecialkids.org)

**MS. NESS:** OK. Thank you.

**MS. KING:** This is Sara.

**MS. HUISKEN:** Hi, Sara.

**MS. KING:** My phone number is 218-284-3724. My e-mail address is sking@Moorhead.k12.mn.us.

**MS. NESS:** Great.

**MS. HUISKEN:** Thank you.

**MS. PETERSON:** Just in case – it's 2:00. And in case they cut us all off, I just wanted to thank everybody for joining us today. There will be a transcript that will be put on the National Center's Web site within about four to six weeks. So, it'll be transcribed encryption of everything that was said. And we do these teleconferences monthly. So, if you also go on that Web site you will see what other topics that are coming up. And that Web site is [www.ncset.org](http://www.ncset.org).

And thank you again.

**MR. MILES:** Thank you.

**MS. HUISKEN:** Thank you.

**MS. NESS:** Thank you.

END OF TELECONFERENCE

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