

OHS 50th Anniversary: Ann Linehan & Bob Bialas Interview

Ann Linehan: Running Head Start and Early Head Start is a complex business. And we need our community partners. What are your thoughts, Bob?

Bob Bialas: Well, for me, you know, I think for the community partners to be successful, we really have to open the doors. And I believe that in many of our tribal communities, we've been very successful in opening doors and really insuring that we're working with our partners, working with childcare, working with home visitation, working with medical and dental care throughout our communities and really working with tribal leaders.

Ann: We have requirements around partnerships that require our Head Start programs to partner with community members. Partnering is one thing. Developing the relationship with a partner and making it really substantive and I think about that with our partnership with our school systems, and our partnership with early intervention. A program can say they have a partnership on paper, but it's the quality of the relationship that they develop with that partner that matters for the children and families.

Bob: Exactly. And I think that it continues with -- in our communities with -- even language. Where many of the tribal communities are really bringing back their language and we have several programs where we have language as part of our daily -- the native language -- as part of their daily curriculum where they could be code switching, or --

Ann: Well, to see the elders come into these classrooms and many of the native language is oral only; so, you are relying on -- you might have an 80 year-old elder in that community coming in and working with the children and supporting the restoration of their native language.

So, I think there are so many different types of partnerships; and I think we're talking about more on the service end and the supportive end; but there're also partnerships that may provide additional supplies or services. So, I think the notion of partnerships is limitless. I think we're focusing I think, today, on those that really impact the services to the children and are supports to the parents.

Bob: Right. Right...