

National Indian Head Start Directors Association 19th Management Training Conference, Oklahoma City, OK: Parent Interview: Marissa Krump

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Jarma Wrighten: And today we have with us... Marissa Krump: My name is Marissa Krump. I am -- parent to a four-year-old daughter. She's -- we're with Head Start in Mandaree -- Little Plume Head Start with the three affiliated tribes in North Dakota. Jarma: All right. And while you're there, your daughter is enrolled in the Head Start program, and...

Marissa: Yep. She goes regularly. Jarma: Regularly? Marissa: Loves it. She... Jarma: She enjoys it! Marissa: Yeah.

Jarma: So today we're going to talk about parents as teachers in the home, and I know when I approached you about parents as teachers in the home, and parents being the first and most important teachers, you seemed very excited and thrilled to jump right in on this one. So, today you get to be a star, sharing your story with us and telling us all about how you support your child's learning in the home, or even when you're out at a grocery store, or at the park.

So we want to hear a little bit about what you do for your together-times with your daughter. How do you spend your time together and engage in learning experiences? Where do you take her? What kinds of fun things do you do?

Marissa: Oh, we go all over. We actually live on the other side of the state, so we drive when we come -- go to Grandma's and Grandpa's -- we spend a lot of time in the car, so we're always pointing out things, saying how it's spelled, how it's, you know, how it sounds...

We sing a lot in the car. We sing -- all the songs. We even made songs up, for all my kids, on how to learn -- teach them how to sing their name -- or spell their name... Jarma: Mm hmm. Marissa: ...through a song. So they -- and now it's getting so normal, you know, they'll just start singin' it when they're bored, they'll just...

Jarma: So they know really how to have a lot of fun. Marissa: Yeah. Jarma: And -- and they've engaged in a whole lot more than you think they have. Marissa: Oh yeah.

Jarma: So you think -- do you think that Head Start's been effective in their role of helping you become a more effective parent, as being that child's first teacher? Marissa: I do. I -- I have been -- I volunteer at Head Start a lot, and I take my experiences of what I see them do there home with me. We'll read a story, and, you know, they -- they finish the story or they, you know, ask them questions when we're done about what the story was about.

They'll -- they'll talk back to me, you know, and we -- Reagan likes to hear stories, or my daughter likes to hear stories, and we -- sometimes, when we've been reading the same book quite a few times, I give her the opportunity to -- we make up her own story. We call it "Reagan's Story," and every time, you know, I start it -- and start with when she was born, and when Mom and Dad found out we were having her, and then she adds her own little things of, "And this is when I did this, and..." you know, and that kind of things, and...

So, you know, it definitely helps me learn new ways -- going to Head Start. And they're showing me how to bring other things in, but... And I bake a lot with my kids. I like to cook, so I -- when we are baking, I -- they help me. They count out how many, you know, cups of flour we need, and how many eggs, and a teaspoon and a tablespoon, and which one's bigger, and those kind of things. And I actually have brought that into the classroom, and I helped -- I did that with the class as well.

Jarma: So when you volunteer in the classroom, you're doing a lot of interacting with other children, and so Reagan not only gets to have Mommy-time with you in the classroom, she knows how to share her experiences from home...

Marissa: Oh yeah. Jarma: ...and transfer them into the classroom environment.

Is Reagan getting ready to leave Head Start? Is she three or four? Marissa: No, this is her first year in Head Start, she

just turned four. Jarma: Okay, so she's four. So that means she's got a long way to go, but she's going to have fun in Head Start because it's a wonderful program. Do you really have a lot of involvement now -- you said you've gotten into the classroom. Are you part of Policy Council, or...?

Marissa: I am part of Policy Council. That's why I'm at the Leader's meeting, or conference. I'm the president of our Parent's Committee in Mandaree, and I'm also the secretary of the Policy Council for the Three Affiliated Tribes.

Jarma: Wow, that's a big role to fill. If you had to share some tips with other parents about being their child's first and most important teacher, what would be some words of encouragement or some just simple thoughts that you'd give to other parents?

Marissa: You're always looking for guidance, but learning is everywhere. I mean, you can always, you know -- looking at the leaves of a tree, and seeing how the leaves move, and telling them about how the wind comes, and what color it is, and how the, you know -- how the -- I just got done talking to my kids about how the trees grow, and it -- and it comes from the sunlight, and that gives us oxygen. So that's just one of the things I just got done -- we were talking about that quite a bit.

Jarma: And then for -- for the experiences with -- with them, and -- and with these words of encouragement to the other parents, you would -- they're taking back the opportunity, like, to get outside, and use home in every facet -- not just inside the house, but learning occurs everywhere... Marissa: Yeah. Jarma: .. and it's an everyday thing.

Marissa: It is an everyday thing. You know, I mean, I'm a student myself, and my husband's a teacher, and, you know, education is -- education is key on -- on everything -- on all levels of success, and just, you know... And it does start early. It starts as early as that baby's first smile of learning and recognizing, and, you know, you just build on top of that. So, yeah.

Jarma: And that's one of the things we -- we know as a parent, that as soon as the child is out of the -- well, while the child is in the womb, the brain is developing, and there's so much that you can do by introducing the music, and, you know, that there's this effect in research about brain development while the child is in vitro, so that's really a lot of what parents should be doing. And I always say to parents, you know, "Do everything at the very beginning, while they're at the first stages in life because it carries on into the school success."

Marissa: My -- my oldest son, we -- you know, I was just pregnant, didn't have any other children -- we listen to music a lot -- and when I was pregnant -- and it wasn't just classical, I, you know -- I like my variety of music, but he's very -- he's very musically oriented, and, you know, even when he was in the belly, he'd move when the music came on. When he was a baby, he'd move to the beat.

You know -- I mean -- so, I mean, that -- it just shows you right there that they -- they take that and they just go with it. Jarma: They sure do. If you had to just close with this one thing that you would say about Head Start that really has made a difference in your professional development or your growth and development that's really made the impact for what you do every day with your child, what would you say?

Marissa: Head Start has -- has been there for me. When we first moved out to the community -- we've only been there for two years -- they kind of just welcomed me with open arms. They've really, you know, helped me to feel comfortable in our new environment, and, you know, they're -- it's a great program. I was unaware of the program when I first went there, but it's -- it's been a great experience full of, you know...

They don't just focus on the child, they focus on the parent, and the parent and child relationship, and, you know -- and so it's -- I don't know if that's what you were asking, but I think it's, you know -- I think that Head Start has definitely just been, you know, a real -- a real good experience for me and my family.

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