

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

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

Jarma Wrighten: Hi, we're here at the National Indian Head Start Director's Conference, and today we have with us Mary, right? And Mary's going to tell us a little bit about herself. We're here to talk about parents as teachers in the home, and we've invited Mary to come and share her story today. So Mary, tell me a little bit about yourself.

Mary Bebeau: Okay. My name is Mary Bebeau, and I'm from the Leech Lake Head Start with an Elder Center -- that's Ball Club -- and my grandson is four years old. His name is Brett, and I've been raising him, and we've -- he's been in Head Start for two years now.

Jarma: Well, how does -- how does he like Head Start? Mary: He does. He really likes school, he likes going to school. Sometimes he doesn't like riding the bus, or leaving home, but once he gets there he's doing -- he does good.

Jarma: So, riding the bus just poses that little problem. Most kids love school, they love the big buses, but that's okay. Brett -- Brett knows that Head Start's a safe place to be. So today -- you know, when we talk about parents as teachers in the home, and being the first and most important teacher, I found it to be one of the subjects that people generally think that they don't do often at home, but you do it every day, because learning occurs every day.

And we know that in research it says that the home has a positive and lasting long impact on the children's school success and readiness, and being able to succeed in life. So, as a parent -- and a grandparent, because you did say you were Brett's grandparent -- tell me a little bit about how you support his learning in the home environment, or -- and, if it's not at home, it could be in the grocery store, outside, on the playground.

What are some of the things you all do together to encourage his growth and development? Mary: Well, for one thing, we do -- we reinforce what he learns at school. And at home, we play Chutes and Ladders, or -- we play games with him, and the games where he can -- he can count, and, you know, he has to count the squares, you know. A lot of kids will just run off, you know, and don't... But he -- he's learning that, with his fine motor skills, because as a four-year-old -- early four-year-old, he wasn't -- his --

...he doesn't have time for -- doesn't slow down for that, but -- and we sit down and we watch Word World, and...

Jarma: Those are some exciting shows you're talking about: Word World, and how he's building his fine motor skills. Now, in your together-time activities, do you find art exciting? You know, what are some of the things that he likes to do most?

Mary: He likes to watch Word World, where you can -- where he's learning the alphabet, the letters. And he watches the cartoons where -- where they teach you the shapes, and how many is, you know -- how -- how many colors are there, or, you know, the different colors. And he likes to interact with the TV, so -- but as far as coloring and painting, he doesn't -- he's not into that too much. He'd rather learn words, and -- and he repeats what they say on TV.

Jarma: So he's really into language and literacy, so he's like the reader, and he likes to know and understand what words mean, and how they connect. So you -- that seems like a big fun-time activity for him. So, as -- as you've been involved with Head Start over the years -- you're in Policy Council, right? Mary: Right.

Jarma: You mentioned that. Okay, so how has Policy Council helped you become more effective in your role as the teaching grandparent? I'm going to give you that title. Mary: Oh. Well, this is my first year as a Policy Council member. When my children were growing up, I was always on the Parent Committee, so -- and the Policy Council's a little bit different. It's a little bit higher, where you make decisions for the classrooms, and...

...and it's made -- I've gotten an understanding of what the different things that Head Start can be doing to helping the children, and in the process, learning that. Then I learn to do the things -- reinforce them at home. So it's been really challenging, because I do have -- he does have -- he's hyper, and so I -- from watching at Head Start and the program -- how they work with him to stay on task, and so -- and we're working with him on that at home.

Jarma: That's a very good testimony that you just shared, because children who have, you know -- you shared that he was hyper -- or have Attention Deficit Disorder or hyperactivity, tend to need to have more focus, and with what you're doing at home to help drive that is very good. The Word World -- you mentioned that earlier -- that would definitely have them to pay attention to different items and different concepts, and so those are good things that you're exposing him to.

If you had to leave parents with words of advice, because you shared quite a few things in -- earlier, what would be the one or two things that you would like to tell other parents about how they could support their child's learning in the -- in the home?

Mary: I guess repetition, because like -- when it's time to go to bed at night, he wants a story, so a lot of times I'll tell him a story with the three bears, or "Hulk" and "Baby Hulk" and "Grandma Hulk," and -- and, I tell a story about what we did that day, and so he's -- and he remembers what we did, and so it's -- he's going through what happened that day. So he knows if something good happened, or if something bad, and so it's just something -- reminding him, letting him know that -- what -- what we did that day.

And it's -- and then -- like if he goes to school, and things, we reinforce it at home. I guess repetition is good, where -- just repeating things over and over to them. Jarma: Okay. Does he have a favorite book or fav -- that he likes to read?

Mary: No, but he likes stories about -- about the three bears, or he likes Hulk Hogan, and we just tell him little stories because he's -- he's the baby. So he's Baby Hulk, and there's Grandma Hulk, and Grandpa Hulk, and... Jarma: So he makes those connections, so it really comes home to the family.

Mary: Yeah, and he always -- he always says, "I need a family hug." Jarma: Oh...that's so sweet. How does Grandpa get involved with him? Mary: He -- now he's -- teaches -- teaches -- he's starting to teach him Ojibwe - our Ojibwe language -- just small words like "no," you know, "gaawiin," and just small...

Jarma: Will you share all those -- how do you say those words? Mary: I can't say too many of them, but, like, "gaawiin", that's "no," you know, and he -- he teaches him the animals so -- and "dog" is [speaking Ojibwe]. So, and, like, "raccoon" is [speaking Ojibwe], and "baby bear" is -- for "bear," "makwa." So he's learning -- learning the Ojibwe words. We're starting with just -- so he has good memory, so he does...

Jarma: He sounds like a fun little boy. Mary: He is. He's very active, keeps me very busy. Jarma: I bet he does. So, really, it makes a family environment that -- so that whole thing about families being involved, families' experiences, their beliefs, their attitudes, and everything, really makes a difference, because it sounds like everything that you're doing is really a good experience for him.

And then you all are such good role models, from the way it sounds, what you're sharing, that he doesn't have a choice but to be that fun-loving kid. You just have a warm spirit. Mary: Right, he does. Jarma: So, what would be your, like -- the one thing that you would say about Head Start that's meant so much to you or that you would say to recommend about Head Start in future in terms of growth and development?

Mary: Well, I guess because it was --he's -- Brett is an only child, and he acts like one. He's so -- and so, what I like him going to Head Start is, he interacts with other children, and he's learning how to share, and everything isn't "mine." And so he -- and he's learning how to eat other foods, and -- and we're also finding out what kind of foods he likes and doesn't like, and what makes him hyper, or...

Jarma: So he's getting a good exposure to different things, and that's -- that's important too. Mary: Yes. Jarma: Do you all do lots of travelling, or does he get out much to see different places?

Mary: I try to -- I try to take him out to different things, but we -- we go to sports activities, we go to basketball games, football games, baseball games...

-- End of Video --

-- Premalink for viewing (requires Flash and javascript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000643-Parent+Interview+Bebeau-2010-SD360p/a6865408B8b4ck4f44m8bc487367e6042e78>