

STANDARDS IN ACTION

TRIBAL LANGUAGE PRESERVATION AND REVITALIZATION (1302.36)



THE CURRENT SITUATION

Sally, the director for the AIAN Sunshine Head Start Program, participates on the Language and Culture Committee established by the Tribal Government. The committee was formed due to a growing concern that fewer and fewer of their tribal members were fluent in their native language. Over the years, the children of fluent speakers were only learning and speaking English. Teachers in the program were not using it in the classroom because they weren't fluent speakers themselves and that's where children were spending most of their day. In fact, the most recent Program Information Report data shows that less than 3 percent of Head Start children in tribal programs nationwide spoke their native language. In this program's efforts to revitalize their tribal language, the committee reviewed current research on language revitalization and preservation as well as literature on teaching children who have dual languages. They learned that approximately half of the 7,000 languages spoken in the world today are expected to lose their last speaker by the end of this century.

SUBPART C—EDUCATION AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

1302.36

A program that serves American Indian and Alaska Native children may integrate efforts to preserve, revitalize, restore, or maintain the tribal language for these children into program services. Such language preservation and revitalization efforts may include full immersion in the tribal language for the majority of the hours of planned class operations. If children's home language is English, exposure to English as described in §1302.31(b)(2)(i) and (ii) is not required.

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THE SOLUTION: FIRST THINGS FIRST

The Tribal Language and Culture Committee developed a tribal-wide action plan to intentionally preserve their tribal language and to grow the number of young, fluent, native speakers in the community. As part of this plan, each Tribal Department developed action steps to support this goal. To create Sunshine Head Start Program's action steps, Sally convened a sub-committee comprised of policy council members, parents, staff, a tribal language expert from a nearby college, and interested fluent-speaking community members, including elders. Together, they created a plan to submit to the Tribal Language and Culture Committee that would support the goal of preserving and revitalizing the tribal language. These included the following actions for the Sunshine Head Start Program:



1. Participate in a Tribal Language Survey to be distributed to all tribal members to determine a current understanding of how people view their culture, values, and interest in preserving traditional ways of life, including their native language.
 2. Ask key staff to attend training on native language preservation and revitalization as well as how to implement a full immersion approach.
 3. Develop partnerships with institutes of higher education.
 4. Conduct a survey of Head Start parents regarding what they believe their young children should learn and best ways to teach as well as what it means to be a tribal member.
 5. Adapt the curriculum to make tribal language and culture the central focus that permeates all aspects of the curriculum (e.g., developmental domains, content areas, environment, teaching practices, family engagement).
 6. Work with the language expert to develop a process for assessing children's progress in learning and using the language.
 7. Implement a full immersion classroom where everyone who enters is encouraged to speak the native language regardless of proficiency level—no English will be allowed. Eventually, the whole program will become a native language-only environment especially when children are present.
 8. Work with the language expert to enhance the program's ongoing child development assessment process to include assessing progress in understanding and participating in tribal culture.
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THE SOLUTION: NEXT STEPS

Sally and the sub-committee on culture and language preservation will meet regularly to review reports on progress toward their goals and achievement of their action steps. They will report this progress to the Tribal Language and Culture Committee as well as to the Policy Council. The Tribal Language and Culture Committee will report the committee's progress to the full Tribal Council. To share this work with the larger community, Sally will collaborate with the feeder elementary school and the local tribal college. Achievement of the Sunshine Head Start's language preservation goals will be phased in over 5-7 years. The outcome of the project will be an increase in the number of Head Start children moving to kindergarten who are well on their way to becoming fluent native speakers. The tribal program's goal and hope is to prepare these native speakers to build the community of native speakers by passing the language along to future generations. They know the benefits include greater connectedness to the culture and community, which in turn will lead to children's more positive self-identities and improved health outcomes.

SELECTED RESOURCES:

- Tribal Language Revitalization Report
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/report/tribal-language-revitalization-report>
- Head Start Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness Resource Catalogue Volume Two: Native and Heritage Language Preservation, Revitalization, and Maintenance (Second Edition)
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/resource-catalogue-main-book-4.pdf>
- Tribal Home Visiting: Cultural Enrichments, Enhancements, and Adaptations of Tribal Home Visiting Programs
https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/1533_thv_cultural_enhancement_brief_508_compliant.pdf
- The QuaNative Projects 2011-2015 Quick Facts <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ana/quick-fact>
 - o Language Projects
- Language Documentation, Revitalization, and Reclamation: Supporting Young Learners and their Communities
<https://www.edc.org/sites/default/files/uploads/RouvierWhitePaperFinal.pdf>

