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Helping Native Students Succeed

I work with the Title VII Native program; my job consists of getting the Indian parents of our schools more involved in their child's education.

I can relate to what Miss Kara Briggs has been through ("Slipping Through the Cracks," spring 2004). I am an Apache Indian from the Southwest. Here in the urban area in which I live, there is so much stereotyping. Adults think all Native Americans are stupid, drunks, and uneducated. Our kids don't have a chance until the educators that teach our children are educated in our cultures. Our dropout rate here is at 70 percent. We have 78 tribes living in Wichita and, yes, they all have different traditions that they try to uphold.

American Indian families are seeking to improve educational opportunities for their children, including opportunities to study their own languages and traditions. With better education comes the hope of a better economic future. We can help improve our children's future—as well as ours—through mentoring and parenting that underscore the preservation of a way of life based on spirituality, sacredness, education, and social responsibility. Without children, a community would fail to thrive and it would die—a catastrophic thought and unimaginable in our cultural ways, (but) our children cannot survive and flourish without our help.

Anyway, I would just like to say thank you to Miss Kara Briggs for the article. I am so glad she made it and fulfilled her vision.

Michael Gallegos

Wichita, Kansas

Editor's note: Mr. Gallegos is interested in hearing from others involved in helping Native children; his e-mail address is MGallegos@usd259.net.

Promoting Attendance

(I'm) very happy to have found your Web site today ("Nets & Paddles," spring 2004). I am a former teacher who works in indigenous education. There are many similarities—invasion, colonialism, attempted genocide, government policies, contemporary student outcomes, land mass, indigenous populations struggling to survive in the "dominant culture," preservation of language—between your area and the Northern Territory.

My colleague and I are currently working on a project to address the poor attendance in many of the indigenous schools. Any strategies or ideas you could share with us, or directions in which you could point us, would be greatly appreciated.

Gabrielle Kennedy

Policy Officer

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and Training

Darwin, Australia

Editor's note: Ms. Kennedy welcomes readers' responses at gabrielle.kennedy@nt.gov.au. One useful resource on attendance is the May 2004 issue of NWREL's By Request series. *Increasing Student Attendance: Strategies From Research and Practice* provides examples of what schools are doing to combat absenteeism. The publication is available online at www.nwrel.org/request/.

We want to hear from you! Send your letters to the editor, article ideas, and tips on places where good things are happening to nwedufeedback@nwrel.org. Letters may be edited for length or clarity.