

Topic 1 – Building Quality in Child Care, Head Start, and Other Early Learning Programs

Examples of success in building quality

- Quality improvement teams visit sites, which helps improve quality and staff morale. Example: Nevada where tribal communities are spread throughout the state.
- Minnesota's Race-to-the-Top Early-Learning-Challenge grant helped provide funding to White Earth Reservation to improve quality in early learning programs.
- Provide specialized coaching.
- Quality rating and improvement system like Minnesota's Parent Aware program, which provides pathways and support for programs to improve quality.
- McKnight Foundation in Minnesota is funding research on workforce issues in early childhood development, including compensation.
- Mobile library focused on helping support early childhood development, travels to homes.

Barriers to building quality

- Insufficient funding.
- Issues with facilities, such as lack of space or in need of remodeling.
- Retaining qualified staff.
- Challenges in collaborating across Head Start and child care.
- Buy-in from tribes to support child care.
- Young children get overlooked, and child care is considered a women's issue so men in leadership don't see it.
- Small communities where everyone knows each other has both advantages and disadvantages.
- Tribal communities can be spread across a large area in a state making it difficult for programs to reach them all.

How communities can address barriers

- Conduct a community assessment which produces data helpful in making the case for competitive grants.
- Advocate for why investments in young children are important.
- Have tribal leaders spend time in early learning centers and classrooms – be in the shoes of teachers.
- Attract and retain qualified staff, including offering competitive salaries and support for housing.
- Help teachers make real progress in their education.
- Expand and improve facilities as needed.

- University extension offices can offer support to programs and teachers, a particularly important resource in rural communities.
- Bring training to teachers, as Montessori Schools are doing in Minnesota and Denver.