

North Dakota Early Reading First Overview

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, which added two important new reading programs to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Reading First and Early Reading First. Early Reading First was created to address the growing concern that many of our nation's children begin kindergarten without the necessary foundation to fully benefit from formal school instruction.

The Minot North Dakota Preschool Literacy Acquisition Collaborative for Education (MiND PLACE) aims to improve the school readiness of 360 low-income, ethnically, and language-diverse children attending three regional Head Start preschools; Minot Public Schools, Early Explorers in Towner, and Three Affiliated Tribes in New Town. This rural area faces numerous challenges to education, including pervasive poverty and unemployment. Approximately 79 percent of children in the project area are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch and 35 percent are English learners. Although growing up in rural America presents a well documented set of educational challenges for young children, including pervasive poverty and limited opportunities, these challenges can be overcome using strategies to ensure that all children who enter school are ready to learn. To address this condition, MiND PLACE will combine a curriculum, proven second language acquisition strategies, professional development, and valid and reliable assessments to create centers of excellence that increase children's language and literacy preparedness. The proposed project will provide a full-day, full-year program to at-risk children, many of whom have limited English proficiency.

To help children acquire the cognitive, oral language, and early literacy skills needed for later success, MiND PLACE will use a multifaceted approach that is grounded in the science of reading and instructional best practices. The approach features eight strategies: (1) increased time for learning; (2) research-based literacy curriculum, Pearson's *Opening the World of Learning*; (3) print- and language-rich classrooms; (4) research-based instructional practices that support individual learning needs; (5) ongoing assessment and progress monitoring; (6) *Scaffolding Early Literacy*, research-based professional development led by Dr. Elena Bodrova and Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning; (7) home-school linkages; and (8) a comprehensive preschool to kindergarten transition program. Videoconferencing will supplement face-to-face professional development and curriculum planning. Formative and summative evaluation will guide program implementation and measure changes in teacher practice and child outcomes.

MiND PLACE serves preschool children in the Minot and surrounding areas within three Head Start Centers:

- Minot Public Schools Head Start
- Three Affiliated Tribes Head Start
- Early Explorers Head Start